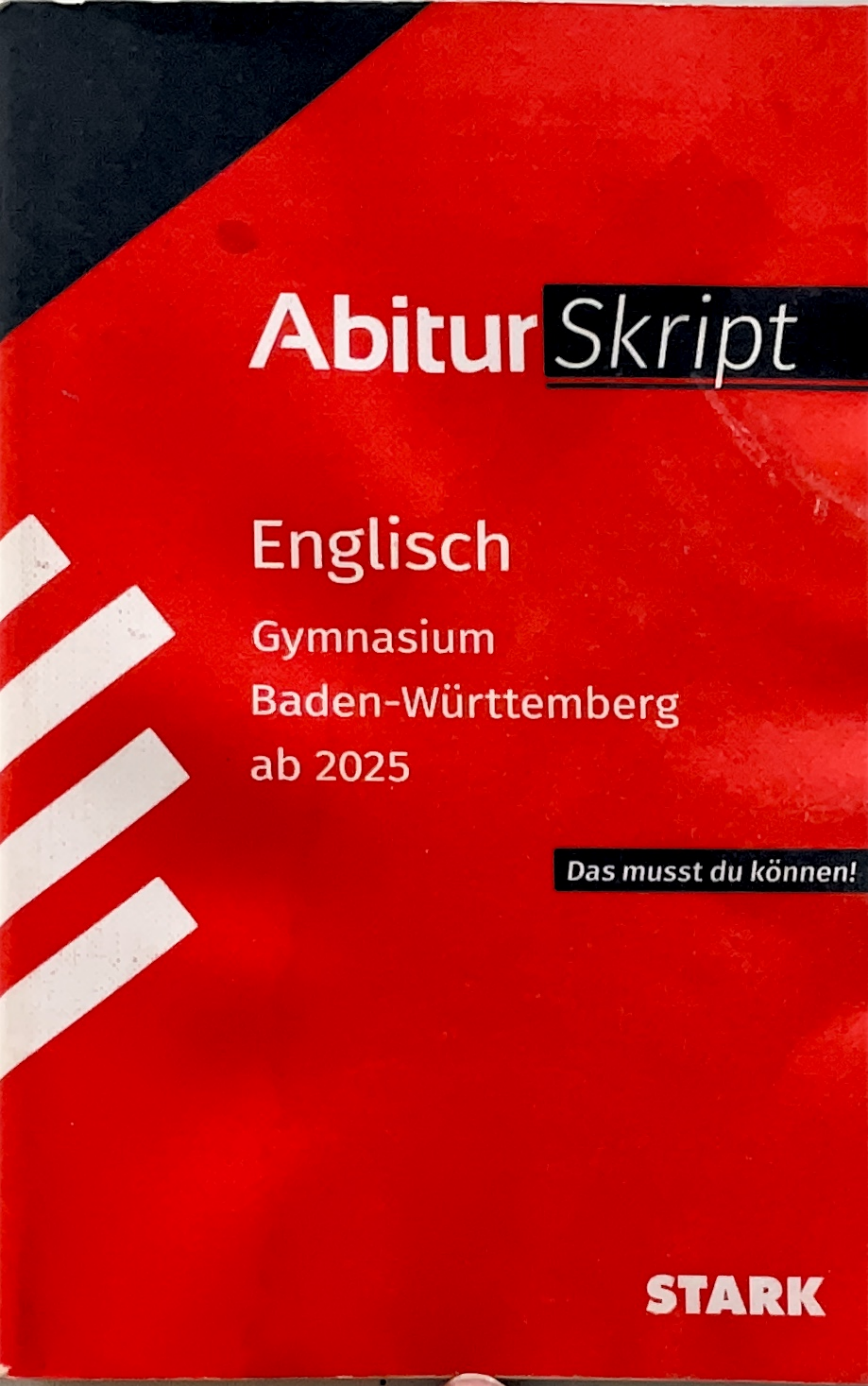

Abitur Skript

Englisch

Gymnasium
Baden-Württemberg
ab 2025

Das musst du können!

STARK

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Vorwort

Liebe Schülerinnen und Schüler,

dieses handliche Skript widmet sich den für Ihre Abiturprüfung wesentlichen Inhalten. Es behandelt das aktuelle **Schwerpunktthema** sowie weitere **landeskundliche Bereiche**, die für Ihre **Englisch**-Prüfung im **Basis- oder Leistungsfach** in Baden-Württemberg relevant sind. In seiner klaren Struktur und Fokussierung eignet sich dieses Skript besonders zur Auffrischung und Wiederholung des Prüfungsstoffs kurz vor dem Abitur:

- In den Abschnitten zu ***Arrival*** und den prüfungsrelevanten **Short stories** werden die wichtigsten Informationen zu Film und Kurzgeschichten in übersichtlicher und prägnanter Form zusammengefasst.
- Der anschließende Abschnitt widmet sich Hauptaspekten des Schwerpunktthemas „**On the move – Migration and cross-cultural encounters**“ und ihrer Behandlung in den Kurzgeschichten.
- **Grafische Darstellungen** erleichtern Ihnen das Lernen. Darüber hinaus wird mit Originalzitaten aus Kurzgeschichten und Film gearbeitet. Diese dienen als konkrete **Beispiele** für abstrakte Inhalte und weisen Sie auf entscheidende Text- und Filmstellen hin.
- Im Kapitel „**Anglo-American culture and our modern world**“ finden Sie **Mindmaps** zu den Themenbereichen **USA**, **UK**, **Global chances and challenges**, **The world of work** und **Science and technology** sowie ein Glossar der zentralen landeskundlichen Begriffe.
- Die insbesondere für das **schriftliche Abitur im Leistungsfach** wichtigen Bereiche sind mit Symbolen gekennzeichnet:

🇺🇸 **Politics, culture, society – between tradition and change (USA)**

🌍 **Global chances and challenges**

Viel Erfolg beim Lernen mit diesem Buch und im Abitur!

Sonja Corleis

Sonja Corleis

Arrival

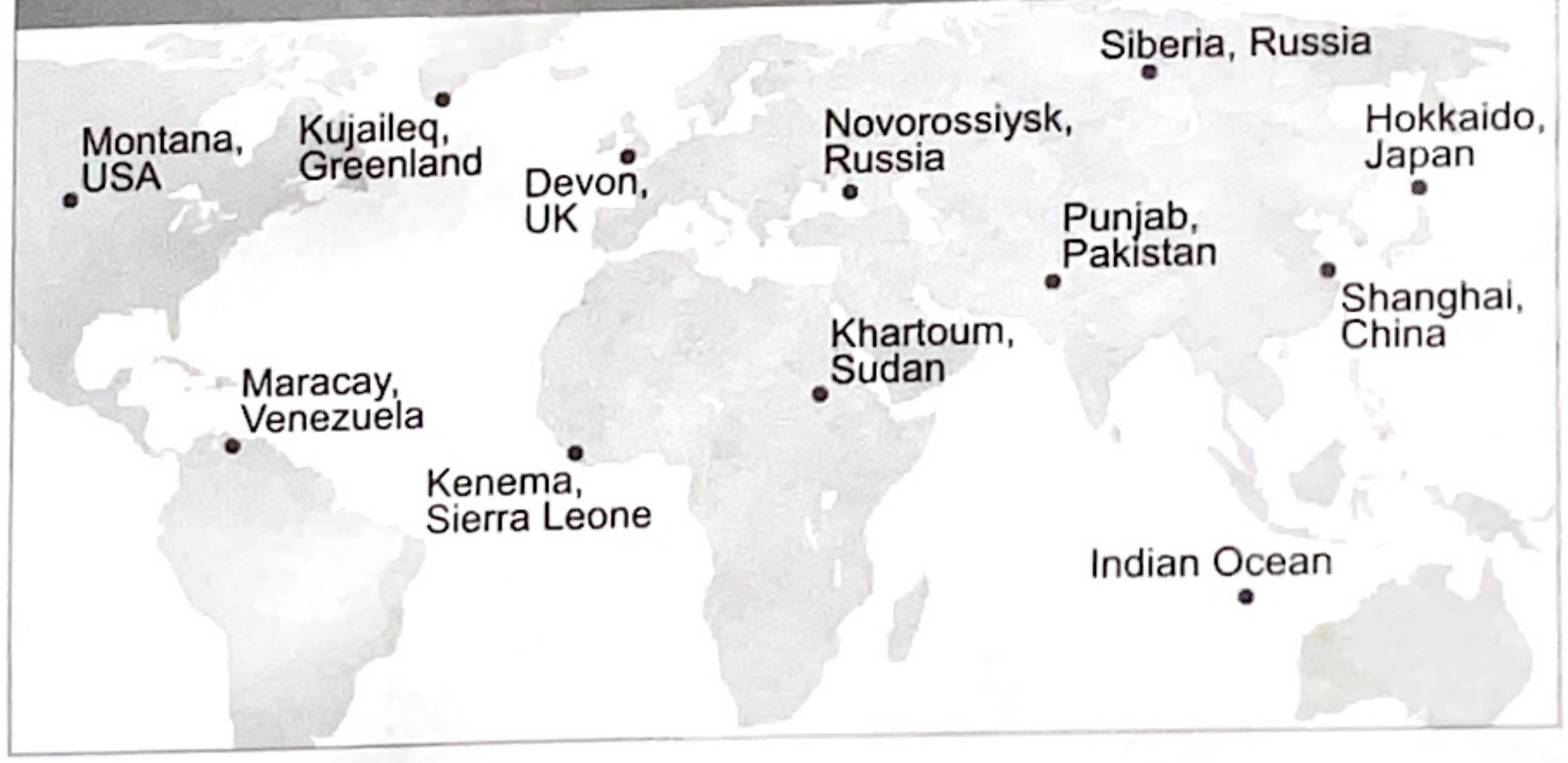
1 Key facts about the film

- **screenplay:** Eric Heisserer (based on the short story "Story of Your Life" by Ted Chiang)
- **director:** Denis Villeneuve
- **release date:** 2016
- **genre:** science-fiction drama
- **main setting:** an undeveloped area of Montana, USA, where contact is established between human beings and heptapods
- **structure:** non-linear plot: film starts with short scenes of Louise's recollections of her daughter Hannah's life and death, main plot regularly interrupted by Louise's visions of Hannah; structure imitates the heptapods' language by putting the end at the beginning, thus forming a circle

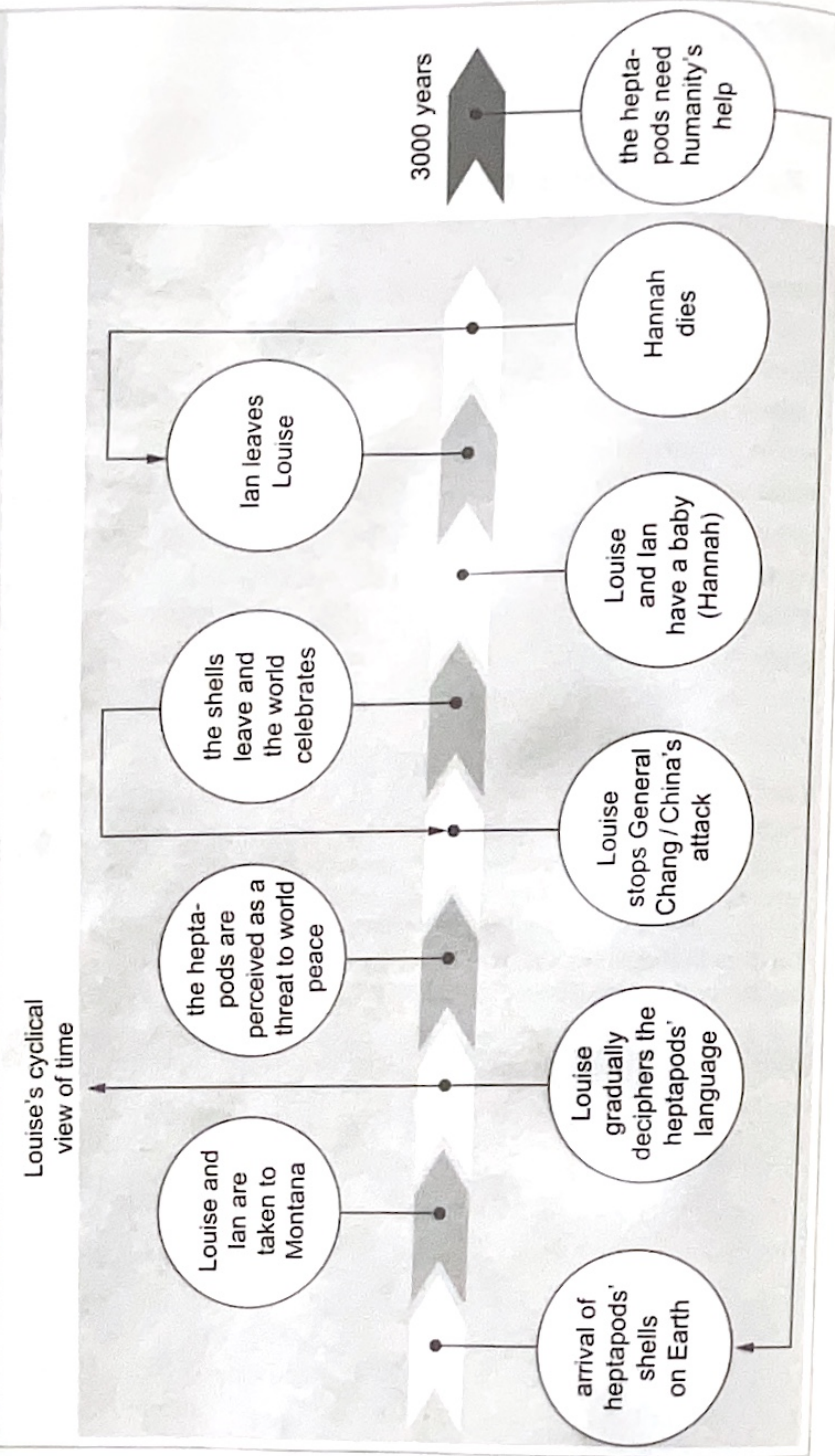
Example

DVD chapter 1: "I used to think this was the beginning of your story. Memory is a strange thing. It doesn't work like I thought it did. We are so bound by time, by its order. [...] I remember moments in the middle. And this was the end. [...] But now I'm not so sure I believe in beginnings and endings. There are days that define your story beyond your life. Like the day they arrived." (Louise addressing Hannah at the beginning of the film)

Positions of the twelve shells in *Arrival*


Siberia, Russia
Montana, USA
Kujaileq, Greenland
Devon, UK
Novorossiysk, Russia
Hokkaido, Japan
Punjab, Pakistan
Shanghai, China
Khartoum, Sudan
Maracay, Venezuela
Kenema, Sierra Leone
Indian Ocean

Chronology of events in *Arrival* in a linear timeline (and the influences a cyclical view of time has on these)


Louise's cyclical view of time
arrival of heptapods' shells on Earth
Louise and Ian are taken to Montana
Louise gradually deciphers the heptapods' language
the hepta-pods are perceived as a threat to world peace
Louise stops General Chang / China's attack
the shells leave and the world celebrates
Louise and Ian have a baby (Hannah)
Ian leaves Louise
Hannah dies
the hepta-pods need humanity's help
3000 years

2 Plot

DVD chapter 1

- The film starts with scenes Louise remembers from her daughter Hannah's short life.
- The main plot commences when Dr. Louise Banks, a renowned linguist, teaches a course at university.
- This is interrupted when she learns of the arrival of giant alien objects at different locations around the world, including Montana, USA.
- Amid a general atmosphere of panic, Louise leaves the university and spends the rest of the evening at her house, following the news about the landings.

DVD chapter 2

- The next day, Colonel G. T. Weber arrives at Louise's study at the university and wants her to translate an audio recording from the alien newcomers.
- Louise demands closer contact to the species to learn their language, but Colonel Weber refuses to take her to Montana at first.
- At night, however, Louise is collected from home and flown to a military camp that has been set up near the "shell" in Montana.
- On the flight, she is introduced to Dr. Ian Donnelly, a theoretical physicist, who is to study the extraterrestrial species with her.

DVD chapter 3

- From the helicopter, Louise sees the gigantic shell for real for the first time.
- Having arrived at the camp, Louise and Ian are medically prepared for their first contact with the aliens and meet their respective teams.
- The camp is also set up to communicate with the other nations where shells have landed.
- They learn that every 18 hours the shells open a shaft filled with an atmosphere that humans can enter.

DVD chapter 4

- In full security gear, Louise and Ian, together with a team of other military and political staff, are taken inside the shell, where they meet two heptapods for the first time.
- Louise's first attempts at making contact are unsuccessful.
- Louise and Ian arrive back from their first meeting with the aliens and are exhausted.

DVD chapter 5

- Louise makes no progress with deciphering the sounds of the heptapods' language and wants to focus on visual communication instead.
- The aliens do indeed communicate by means of intricate painted symbols and Louise incites a first reaction from them by using written words.
- Meanwhile, elsewhere in the country, a state of emergency continues.
- Louise justifies her spoken-written approach to an impatient Weber by saying she is trying to avoid misinterpretations.

DVD chapter 6

- In another encounter with the heptapods, Louise takes off her protective clothing to elicit a more personal response from the heptapods.
- Sure enough, they then interact directly with her and Ian, who has also taken off his hazmat suit. Louise and Ian call the two heptapods Abbott and Costello.
- After this first close encounter, Louise has her first indistinct vision of the future. While Louise gets better at deciphering the heptapods' symbols, her visions of a little girl become more and more vivid.

DVD chapter 7

- Ian surmises that the heptapods' writing conveys meaning, not sound, and that their logograms are non-linear in structure. In other respects, the scientists are still far from knowing anything about the aliens' purpose in coming to Earth.
- Louise and Ian become closer to each other.

DVD chapter 8

- Uncertainty about the heptapods' intentions leads to conspiracy theories, criticism of the government and the military, and demonstrations and panic among sections of the world's population.
- Louise experiences even more vivid visions of the girl, apparently her future daughter, Hannah, whom she raises alone after the girl's father has left them.
- Louise and Ian have a conversation about the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which suggests that language influences a person's way of thinking. Louise reacts evasively when Ian asks her whether she dreams in the heptapods' language.

DVD chapter 9

- Louise finally asks Abbott and Costello why they are here.
- The answer, "offer weapon", elicits renewed panic, because many world leaders interpret it as a prompt to get the nations to fight each other.
- While Louise tries to clarify that "weapon" could also mean "tool", several countries break off communications with the others.

DVD chapter 10

- China declares the aliens hostile and wants the other countries to oppose them too.
- Back in the shell, Louise tries to clarify the heptapods' purpose.
- Costello suddenly disappears and Abbott sends a shock wave through the transparent barrier so that Louise and Ian are expelled from the shaft and thus narrowly escape an explosion provoked by the military, who have attempted to kill the aliens.

DVD chapter 11

- The shell appears unharmed and stays in Montana, only further off ground.
- China issues a 24-hour ultimatum for the heptapods to leave, and other countries also mobilise forces.
- Ian finds out that the heptapods' messages are divided into twelve parts among the twelve sites in the world where they have landed so

that the countries have to work together to find out the complete meaning.

- Louise supports this theory after having another vision, in which she talks to Hannah about the term "non-zero sum game", which is another word for a "win-win situation" and describes a situation in which working together is the best solution.
- However, the US team is ordered to withdraw.

DVD chapter 12

- Louise goes to the shell on her own to talk to the aliens again.
- In a gravity-free atmosphere, she learns from Costello that Abbott has been deadly injured by the explosion.
- With Costello's help she begins to understand that the aliens have come to offer humanity a gift because, in return, they will need human help in three thousand years.
- It begins to dawn on Louise that their gift is their language and, in connection with that, their cyclical perception of time.
- In another vision of Louise and Hannah, it becomes clear that Louise has indeed learnt to see into the future. She explains to Hannah that her father has left the family because she "told him something that he wasn't ready to hear".

DVD chapter 13

- Louise has further visions of a future, in which she teaches classes about the heptapods' language and has written a book about them.
- Louise tries to convince everyone that the heptapods' gift is one of peace, but, in the midst of the chaos of evacuation, nobody wants to listen.
- Louise finally uses the heptapods' gift to look into the future, where she meets General Shang, the Chinese military leader, at a United Nations celebration. He thanks her for changing his mind and gives her his personal mobile phone number.

DVD chapter 14

- Back in the military camp, Louise calls General Shang over satellite phone and tells him the last words of his dying wife, which she learned during their future meeting.

DVD chapter 15

- China and the other countries refrain from attacking the aliens.
- The shells disappear.

DVD chapter 16

- Ian confesses his love to Louise.
- Despite knowing the future, i. e. that Hannah will die from a rare disease at an early age and that Ian will leave her when she tells him that she knew about it beforehand, Louise decides to embrace the future and consents to have a baby together with Ian.

3 Characters

Dr. Louise Banks

- linguistics professor
- **brave:** takes off her hazmat suit to get into contact with the aliens, acts against orders, decides to give birth to Hannah despite knowing that her death will cause her incredible pain
- **thinks outside the box:** more than "mechanical" translations of foreign languages, tries to get a feeling for foreign cultures, even learns to think like the heptapods
- **successful and ambitious:** seems to live for her job (which at times makes her **lonely and antisocial**), wants to be preferred to her rival from Berkeley
- **melancholic** at times, which might be due to her advance knowledge of the future
- **loving** and **empathetic** mother

Dr. Ian Donnelly

- theoretical physicist
- falls **in love with Louise** and respects her bravery and intelligence
- **open-minded and brave:** supports Louise unwaveringly
- **curious and experimental:** asks lots of questions, genuinely interested in the aliens

- **self-confident** and **humorous**
- describes himself as **antisocial** and with his "head tilted up to the stars"
- values **honesty:** leaves Louise when she confesses that she knew about Hannah's future from the beginning
- **sensitive:** cannot cope with his daughter's illness and death

Colonel G. T. Weber

- **military outlook:** strict, pragmatic, realistic and sometimes even pessimistic
- also **prepared to bend the rules** and permit Louise's individual style

"Abbott" and "Costello"

- extraterrestrial beings with seven legs, resembling giant black octopuses
- named by Louise and Ian after a **US comedy duo** whose most famous sketch is about frustrating misinterpretations of communication
- terrifying and powerful, but **benign:** want to help humans and build a relationship with them, Abbott even sacrifices his life to warn Louise and Ian
- **wise:** communicate in a highly complex way, perceive time in a circular fashion and are therefore acting with foresight
- **quiet and unobtrusive**

Minor characters

- **Hannah:** Louise's and Ian's daughter, dies of an incurable disease at the age of twelve
- **Agent Halpern, Captain Marks, Dr. Kettler:** members of the military and civil staff at the base in Montana
- **General Shang:** Chinese military leader, feels it necessary to attack the aliens, but allows Louise (and his wife's last words) to change his mind

4 Cinematic devices

Music and sound

- *Arrival* won Academy Award for Best Sound Editing
- "The most important sound for this movie was silence." (Villeneuve)
- e. g. contrast between harsh sound effects that highlight the mechanical atmosphere of the military camp and Louise's loud breathing in the otherwise very silent atmosphere of the shell
- music by vocal ensemble "Theatre of Voices" uses human voice in distorted way to address the theme of having to decipher language
- piano and vocal loops (repeated sections of sound material) to mirror the circular language of the heptapods
- experimental music, e. g. combination of deep hum with high-pitched whines: hypnotising, reminiscent of whale song
- opening and final scene (Hannah): very emotional, classical music to underline the human impact of the film

Special effects

- for a science-fiction film, *Arrival* uses special effects very sparingly to focus on the psychological evolution of the characters
- aliens are supposed to look familiar and yet completely new at the same time; their design conveys both a threat and, at the same time, gentleness and wisdom (Villeneuve compared them to whales)
- appearance of the shells: gigantic, otherworldly quality, radiate calm and tension at the same time

Lighting and use of colour

- dark and sombre colours dominate the film: sober atmosphere in the military camp and around the clinical work performed by the scientists; cooler colours also make Louise seem strained and worn down by the hard work
- darkness (in the shell) also adds to the tension; white fog surrounding the heptapods is almost painfully bright
- scenes with Hannah when she is still healthy are colourful by contrast
- lighting during Ian's declaration of love could represent sunset or sunrise (cyclical interpretation of time)

5 Language and symbols

Language as a tool or a weapon

- Ian's very first words, which are a quote from a preface to one of Louise's books, introduce the general topic of how **communication can be used and abused:** "Language is the glue that holds a people together, it is also the first weapon drawn in a conflict".
- Louise's translation of the Sanskrit word for "war" vs that of the Berkeley professor: Louise's suggestion to call it "a desire for more cows" shows a more **productive interpretation** than the Berkeley professor's more destructive and simplified "argument". Context and interpretation are important to avoid **misunderstandings**.
- The biggest misunderstanding arises when it comes to the **aliens' purpose on Earth**. They want to offer humanity a gift, i.e. their language, which is at first misunderstood as a weapon, but, when understood more benignly, is intended as a tool for unification (of time and peoples).
- The **last words of General Shang's wife**, which Louise quotes to him, thereby stopping him from attacking the aliens, translate as "wars don't make winners, only widows". Here, though it has a military connotation, language proves to be the tool that saves the world.

Time as a circle, not a line

- The **circular symbols of the heptapods' language** resemble time loops in which cause and effect repeat continuously in a circular pattern. For the heptapods, future events, such as their need for humanity's help in 3,000 years, are very much part of the present.
- Ian and Louise talk about the **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis**, according to which the structure of a language influences (or mirrors) its speakers' way of thinking. Although modern linguists agree that this hypothesis is not entirely true, it explains the plot of the film: as she learns the heptapods' language, Louise starts to have visions of the future. (Her first vision of Hannah appears after her first close contact with Abbott and Costello.) The non-linear line of thought in the language alters her perception of time.

- **Hannah's name** is a palindrome, i.e. a word that reads the same forwards and backwards. Its beginning and ending are the same, which resembles the circular symbols of the heptapods. This also symbolises the non-linear, all-consuming presence she is in Louise's life.

The canary

- The canary the scientists take with them into the shaft of the shell is used as an **indicator for a lack of oxygen** or for poisonous gas. In former times, canaries were also used to indicate a lack of oxygen in coal mines.
- This shows that the scientists are entering unknown (and possibly dangerous) territory.
- At the same time, the canary's chirping also symbolises **hope** and **inter-species communication:** It is sometimes the only sound in an otherwise oppressive silence, and before Louise takes off her hazmat suit, she looks to the canary for reassurance.

The number twelve

- The heptapods send twelve spacecrafts to **all inhabited continents** on Earth and to a **variety of cultures** (cf. map on page 1).
- By splitting up their message into twelve parts, their intention is to unify all the peoples by forcing them to **collaborate**.
- Twelve is also a significant number with regard to **time:** many calendar systems have twelve parts, and 60 minutes and 24 hours are all divisible by twelve.

6 Themes and interpretation

Particularly when seen as a parable for an **extreme cross-cultural encounter**, *Arrival* includes several overarching messages:

- **fear of the unknown and its consequences:** While it might be normal to react to a completely new encounter with caution and maybe even fear, the film shows the dangers of letting fear dominate the exchange, because this often creates a spiral of violence.
- **importance of intercultural understanding:** Instead, patience, empathy, communication and open-mindedness are presented as the keys to success. While it can be hard to shed one's own cultural biases, overcoming divides and seeing the world in different ways is ultimately enriching (and even life-saving when it comes to the alien-human encounter in *Arrival*, or life-affirming in the context of Hannah's life).
- **cooperation is preferable to egocentrism:** This can be interpreted as one of the main messages of the film because the reason why the heptapods arrive on Earth is a "give-and-take" approach: by giving humans their language, they teach them how to cooperate. In return, humans might be able to help the heptapods in the future. In contrast, the world is on the brink of destruction when the nations break off all contact to each other.
- **both importance and difficulty of successful communication:** Language plays a very important role in the film, and both the negative consequences of misunderstandings – partly because of not being able to shed one's own (cultural) lens – and the positive outcomes of successful communication are shown.
- All these themes are **interconnected** in the character of Louise: her mindset of curiosity, bravery, openness and empathy as well as her willingness to experience pain and failure help her to learn and understand the heptapods' language. It is her intervention that enables global cooperation and so in the end it is her "**intercultural competence**" that saves humanity.

Short stories – Leaving and arriving

This unit of short stories focuses on the **migratory experience** itself. The stories give insight into various **motives for migration** and the **challenges** migrants face on arrival.

1 "Loose Change"

1.1 Key facts about the short story

- **author:** Andrea Levy, 1956–2019, born in London to Jamaican parents who belonged to the Windrush generation
- **year of publication:** 2005
- **setting:** The National Portrait Gallery in London
- **narrative situation:** first-person narrative (unnamed London woman)
- **narrated time:** about one hour (in the present)
- **structure:** chronological plotline with a clear turning point (narrator learning that Laylor is not a Spanish tourist but an Uzbek refugee)

Background information

Uzbekistan	In 2005, the year "Loose Change" was published, protests against the violation of basic human rights in Uzbekistan were ended violently. Journalists and dissidents were persecuted.
Windrush generation	Just like Andrea Levy's parents, the narrator's grandmother probably belonged to the Windrush generation: in 1948, the first large group of immigrants from the West Indies were brought to the UK on the HMT Empire Windrush. After World War II, the UK needed workers and the British Nationality Act gave people from the colonies the right to British citizenship.

- **type of migration:** political migration, seeking refuge
- **migration route:** Tashkent, Uzbekistan → London, UK

London, UK
Tashkent, Uzbekistan

1.2 Plot

- The first-person narrator finds herself in need of change for a tampon machine in the lavatory of the National Portrait Gallery.
- A young woman with a foreign accent offers her coins, despite not having enough money to change a ten-pound note.
- The narrator wants to pay back the 60 pence she borrowed, but the young woman leaves.
- Meeting again in the gallery, the two women look at some pictures and the narrator treats the young woman to a cup of tea.
- During their conversation, the narrator finds out that the young woman's name is Laylor and that she comes from Uzbekistan.
- Laylor's brother arrives and he and Laylor argue in their language.
- After he has left, Laylor tells the narrator that they arrived three days ago and are sleeping rough in London. They had to flee from Uzbekistan because their parents are journalists who have been arrested.
- The narrator becomes aware of little details in Laylor's appearance that seem to indicate her difficult situation and starts to think that Laylor has sought her out to get help.
- Although drawn to Laylor's plight, the narrator pictures potential difficulties and disruption to her own life if she were to offer her a place to stay.

- She remembers her grandmother, who immigrated from the Caribbean and has always told her grandchildren that she had been saved by a stranger offering her a warm bed for the night.
- The narrator resolves to help Laylor and imagines a scenario in which she cares for her in a very warm and motherly way.
- However, when getting some serviettes for Laylor's runny nose, the narrator does not go back to the girl but simply leaves.

1.3 Characters

Narrator

- Londoner of Caribbean descent (third-generation immigrant)
- single mother of a boy
- probably a teacher
- **aloof and distant:** sees herself as a typical Londoner who does not like to come into contact with strangers
- **well-mannered, but also slightly arrogant:** adamant about giving back the money she borrowed, does not like Laylor's loud voice or her table manners
- **hypocritical:** contrast between how she would like to be and how she really behaves

Laylor

- about 18 years old
- fled from Uzbekistan with her younger brother (parents, who are journalists, have been arrested)
- **appearance:** black hair, wide, black eyes, round face, solid jawline, one tooth missing
- **generous and kind:** gives money to a stranger despite her own poverty
- **slightly naive and innocent:** enthusiasm for London, interest in portraits of famous stars
- **optimistic** despite her **helpless and desperate** situation

1.4 Language and symbols

Title

- "Loose Change" can be understood **literally** as referring to the coins that Laylor gives the narrator, thereby initiating contact.
- However, it could also be understood **non-literally** as a **noncommittal crossing of ways:** the narrator simply breaks loose from her obligation and the responsibility she feels towards Laylor.

Portraits

- **Laylor likes** the portraits of a famous ballet dancer and David Beckham, the famous football player. Both somehow embody naive **childhood dreams** of a glorious, affluent life.
- In contrast, all the pictures **the narrator prefers** show writers and critics (a playwright, a feminist professor and a novelist) in **an artistically highbrow style**. They stand for the way the narrator would like to see herself, although in the end she just walks away from the **inconvenience** of burdening herself with Laylor.

The narrator's **hypocrisy** also becomes evident in the way she thinks about the other women, who complain about trivialities, in a somewhat condescending way, while at the same time wishing she were simply one of them.

Example

> "At the next table a woman was complaining loudly that there was too much froth on her coffee. Her companion was relating the miserable tale of her daughter's attempt to get into publishing. What did they think about the strange girl sitting opposite me? Nothing. Only I knew what a menacing place Laylor's world had become. […] But why me? I had my son to think of. Why pick on a single mother with a young son? We haven't got the time. Those two women at the next table, with their matching handbags and shoes, they did nothing but lunch. Why hadn't she approached them instead?"

Unreliability of perception

- At the beginning of the story, Laylor catches the narrator's eye, but **not necessarily in a negative way** ("the most spectacular eyebrows", "there was something about this girl"). This is when she still thinks Laylor is a Spanish tourist.

- Only when she learns the truth about the girl's origins, does her **perception change:** she now perceives Laylor as untidy and repellent, which helps her to justify her refusal to help.

Example

> "It was then I began to notice things I had not seen before: dirt under each of her chipped fingernails, the collar of her blouse crumpled and unironed, a tiny cut on her cheek, a fringe that looked to have been cut with blunt nail-clippers. […] She'd lost a tooth. I noticed the ugly gap […] She smelt of mildewed washing. Imagine her dragging that awful stink into my kitchen. Cupping her filthy hands round my bone china. […]"

- The narrator is **unreliable** when it comes to her perception of Laylor.

Contrasting of warm and cold

- The story inside the National Portrait Gallery is **framed** by the cold in the streets of London: "I'd just gone into the National Portrait Gallery to get out of the cold" || "I pushed through the revolving doors and threw myself into the cold".
- The cold outside mirrors **the coldness of the narrator's decision** not to help the refugees.
- This is especially evident in the **contrast** between the harmful effects of the cold and the narrator's warm home.

Example

> "It had begun to feel […] like acid was being thrown at my exposed skin. My fingers were numb […] I barely felt the pull of the zip. […] The memory of the bitter cold still tingled at my fingertips […]" **vs** "I had three warm bedrooms, one of them empty. […] I would run her a bath filled with bubbles. Wrap her in thick towels heated on a rail. I would then hunt out some warm clothes and after I had put my son to bed I would make her cocoa."

The narrator's grandmother

- Her grandmother's experience with "[h]er Good Samaritan" makes the narrator feel **obliged to help**.
- However, the grandmother is **ambivalent** too because nowadays she opposes immigration and has turned hostile towards refugees.

2 "The Soldier's Tale"

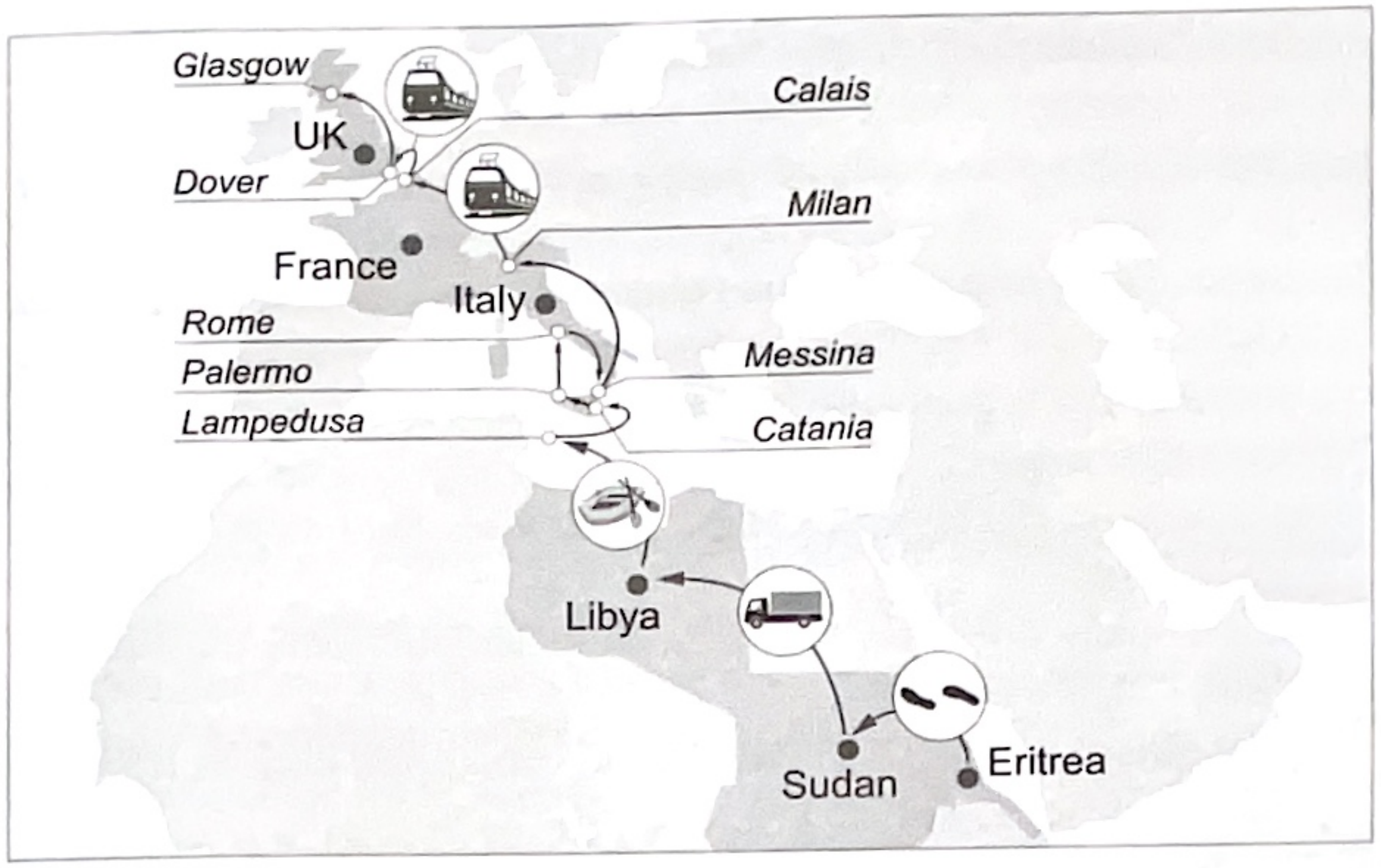
2.1 Key facts about the short story

- **author:** Neel Mukherjee, *1970, born in India, moved to England as a student with a scholarship and has made the country his home
- **year of publication:** 2017
- **background:** the story is based on an interview the author conducted with a former soldier from Eritrea, who was detained in the UK; it is based on a true story

Background information

indefinite detention	Detaining refugees for an unspecified amount of time, though deemed highly problematic by a report published by the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), is still practised in some countries, including the UK. Usually, it is refugees with unclear immigration status who have to suffer the trauma and uncertainty of indefinite detention.
human trafficking	Human trafficking refers to the illegal transportation of people across borders. It involves violence or deceit, i. e. people are often lured by false promises into paying tremendous sums of money for an allegedly safe passage. However, traffickers tend to exploit the plight of refugees by only providing very basic, highly dangerous means of transportation and no help at all at their destination, thus making a huge profit from the undertakings.

- **setting:** for the story forming the framework: unspecified, presumably the narrator's office; indirect: places on Salim's migration route
- **narrative situation:** first-person narrative (Home Office worker)
- **narrated time:** 1996 to more or less the present (although there is no clear indication of when Salim first entered the UK and was detained there)
- **structure:** Salim's story framed by Home Office worker's narration
- **type of migration:** economic and political migration, seeking asylum
- **migration route:** Eritrea → Sudan → Libya → Italy (Lampedusa, Sicily, Rome, Messina, Milan) → France (Calais) → UK (Dover, Glasgow)



2.2 Plot

- The narrator explains that they process asylum applications and have to read case files involving stories full of atrocities.
- Nevertheless, they have to reject a large number of applicants and have to find mistakes in their stories to detect lies.
- One of the stories that strike a nerve in the narrator is that of Salim from Eritrea:
  - At age 17, Salim is made to join the army and fight against Ethiopia and Djibouti for six years.
  - When he asks to leave the army, he is imprisoned underground until he manages to escape after one year.
  - He enters Sudan without any papers, works there illegally for eight years, marries Abeda and has a son.
  - Salim pays a human trafficker to take him to Libya for a regular job and papers.
  - In Libya, however, he is sold as a slave to work in the desert. Six months later, he moves to Benghazi and then to Tripoli, where he does odd jobs for another year.
  - For $1,600, another trafficker lures him and 84 others by promising a better life in Europe. They almost drown on the crossing by

boat because their dinghy has holes in it, but are saved by Tunisian fishermen after four days, who take them to Lampedusa.
  - Salim's fingerprints are taken there and he is put in a refugee camp in Sicily.
  - More than a year later, he is granted asylum in Italy for five years. Homeless and penniless, he lives on the streets and eats rubbish, moving from Sicily to Rome, Messina, Milan and then on to Calais by train.
  - In the refugee camp in Calais, Salim loses his Italian documents and phone.
  - After many attempts, he succeeds in jumping onto the Eurostar from Calais to Dover.
  - The British Home Office decides to deport him back to Italy, but Salim refuses to go.
  - In detention, he is visited by someone from a visitor's group, who gives him hope.
  - Salim is relocated to Glasgow, having to report to the Home Office outpost there in person every other week, waiting to be deported to Italy or to be granted asylum in the UK.
- The narrator has countless questions about details in Salim's story. It is summed up as an endless pendulum between hope and despair.

2.3 Characters

Narrator

- unnamed British Home Office worker
- torn between his/her **duty** to find evidence against granting Salim asylum in the UK and his/her **emotional** reactions to Salim's plight
- sometimes **critical** of the system, **sarcastic**

Salim

- Muslim man from Eritrea
- father of a son who lives with his grandmother (Salim's mother) in Sudan

- **perseverant:** has spent years in horrible conditions and still manages to keep fighting
- **desperate:** finally worn down by uncertainty and the long wait, only the visitor's group worker prevents him from killing himself
- **yearning to be free:** does not want to go back to Italy, where he feels as imprisoned as he was in Eritrea

Minor characters

- **Abeda:** Salim's Ethiopian wife and mother of his son, whose Christian family objects to her marriage to a Muslim man from Eritrea; leaves their son with Salim's mother in Sudan and returns to Ethiopia
- **Omar/Ali:** human trafficker; takes $1,000 from Salim to take him to Libya; sells him to Ahmad
- **Ahmad:** rich Libyan; buys Salim; takes him into the Sahara Desert to look after sheep without payment

2.4 Language and symbols

Title

- It **plays with the reader's expectations**, because it suggests a heroic story full of action and adventure. Salim's journey is indeed a heroic endeavour, but one that does not provide a happy ending. Instead the short story is a terrible and sad **report of real life**.
- "The Soldier's Tale" is part of a larger project to raise awareness. For this project, refugees share their stories, often while walking across Britain from one detention centre to another. The titles (and the tradition of telling stories while walking) are based on Geoffrey Chaucer's famous book, ***The Canterbury Tales***.

Use of personal pronouns

- The third word in the first sentence is "**we**" ("What do **we** want from the world?"). Thus, the narrator encompasses everyone and stresses the **universality of human needs**.

- The narrator also addresses the reader directly ("Such a small thing to want from life, **don't you think**, to be safe from harm?"). The story aims at **triggering the reader's conscience**.
- The narrator also employs the separating pronouns **"they/them"** ("But you learn very quickly that you have to turn down most of **them**"; "they come to you seeking protection and you end up protecting yourself from **them**?"). The asylum seekers are not part of the community that both the reader and the narrator belong to. Establishing a **barrier** seems necessary to be able to ignore their plight.

Tone

- The **mostly formal/bureaucratic tone** mirrors the narrator's attempt to look at even the cruellest aspects of the refugees' stories from a rational, aloof perspective and to hide behind the bureaucracy of rules.

Examples

"the commonest argument is that the applicant will be killed/tortured/imprisoned if he is sent back to the place he has escaped from"

"This latter fact [the fact that Salim has a small son] belongs to a category we call 'discretionary', the unsaid rule being that it is, or should be, orthogonal to any decision made about the refugee's leave to remain."

- However, the narrator cannot help but be **touched emotionally** by Salim's fate, which is expressed in **a more personal/figurative style**.

Examples

"He is still suspended in this purgatory, waiting and hoping and dreading."

"And this is what pierces through my hard shell."

- The narrator tends to be **sarcastic/bitter/resentful**, thereby stressing the incompatibility of the job with a humanitarian standpoint.

Example

"Nice twist, isn't it, that they come to you seeking protection and you end up protecting yourself from them?"

Questions

- The question **"What do we want from the world?"** is repeated in slight variations throughout the story. It underlines how **understandable and essential** the refugees' **needs and desires** are.
- The variation of the question (and its answer) at the end of the text in particular ("And what does the world want from the people in search of a point of rest? Nothing.") also highlights another aspect of the refugee experience, namely the **state of inactivity and uselessness** the refugees often find themselves in during their time in detention.
- The numerous questions about details of Salim's journey at the end of the short story reveal a development in the narrator's state of mind: while they are superficially still aimed at detecting holes in Salim's story, they also highlight the **human-interest factor** of his experiences, which becomes more and more important to the narrator.

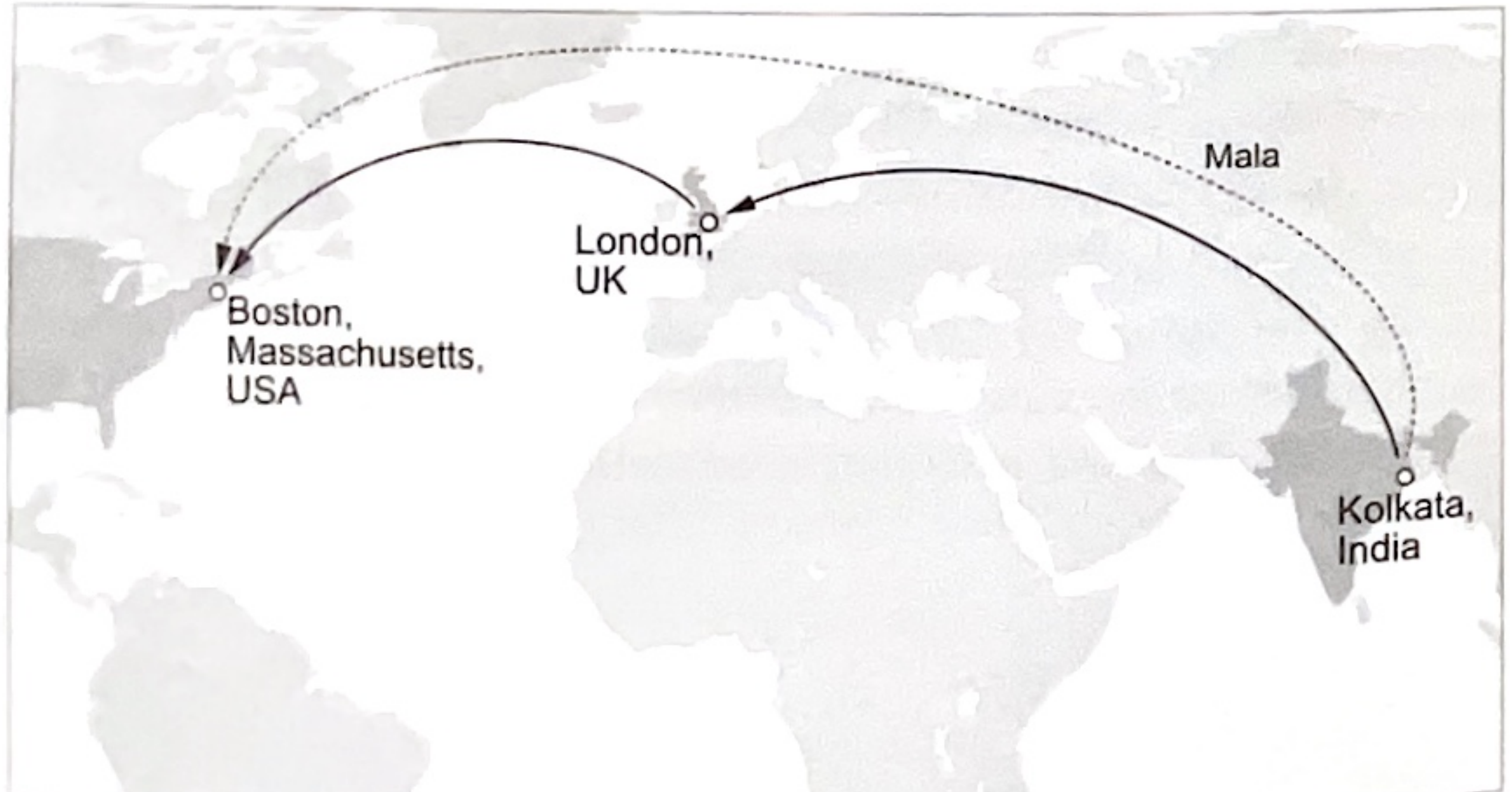
Inconsistencies

- Some inconsistencies in Salim's story are pointed out to show how easy it can be to **reject a refugee's claim to asylum** although these inconsistencies do not make the story less shocking in general.
- Some of these inconsistencies include:
  - Mix-up in names – Ali/Omar: Salim is sold to Ahmad by Omar, but demands payment from Ali
  - Salim's journey in Italy seems arbitrary: from Sicily to the mainland (Rome), back to Sicily and then on to Milan
  - the money Salim earns is not accounted for: $1,000 in eight years in Sudan, $1,600 in one year (!) in Libya
  - the description of "[t]hirteen years in different kinds of confinement or on the run escaping from them" does not seem to fit the detailed description of Salim's experiences

3 "The Third and Final Continent"

3.1 Key facts about the short story

- **author:** Jhumpa Lahiri, *1967, born in London to Indian parents, moved to the USA at the age of three
- **year of publication:** 1999
- **setting:** (London, UK); (Kolkata, India); Boston area, Massachusetts, USA (YMCA hostel, Mrs. Croft's house, narrator's and Mala's home)
- **narrative situation:** first-person narrative (unnamed, male, Indian immigrant)
- **narrated time:** 1964 to approx. 1999
- **structure:** no chapters but can be divided according to content:
  - 1st part: short; about the narrator's time in the UK
  - 2nd part: the longest part; about his first weeks in the US at Mrs. Croft's (short interruption: time around the narrator's wedding in Kolkata)
  - 3rd part: long; his first weeks in the US with Mala
  - 4th part: short; the narrative present (~ 1999)
- **type of migration:** economic migration (student and labour migration), social migration (family migration)
- **migration route:** Kolkata, India → London, UK → Boston area, Massachusetts, USA



3.2 Plot

- In 1964, the narrator travels by boat from India to the UK.
- In London, he lives together with other poor Bengali bachelors, working and studying.
- Five years later, aged 36, his marriage is arranged in India and he is offered a job at the MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) library in Boston, USA.
- He arrives there on the day of the first manned landing on the moon and has to get used to life in the US.
- After a few days at the YMCA, he rents a room from an old woman named Mrs. Croft.
- Although the old lady is quite harsh and direct, she and the narrator develop their own routine and get on quite well.
- On Sundays, Mrs. Croft's daughter Helen regularly brings soup for her mother. From her, the narrator learns that Mrs. Croft is already 103 years old, raised her children by giving piano lessons after her husband's death and lives alone, receiving little care from others.
- He is deeply amazed by Mrs. Croft's life story, especially because it is in stark contrast to his own mother's life in India.
- After six weeks, the narrator's wife, Mala, arrives. The narrator moves out of Mrs. Croft's and into a flat with his wife.
- At first, the couple feel alienated and for the narrator, who is already used to his solitary life in the USA, both Mala's presence and her typically Indian customs seem strange.
- This only changes when the narrator and Mala visit Mrs. Croft together: Mrs. Croft expresses her approval of Mala, and the narrator and his wife share a laugh.
- Later, the narrator is deeply moved when he reads Mrs. Croft's obituary.
- Almost 30 years later, the narrator and his wife are still happily married, they are parents of a son who attends Harvard University and both have become American citizens.

3.3 Characters

Narrator

- unnamed Indian male who moves to the UK and later to the USA
- in his thirties during the 1960s
- **ambitious**
- very **adaptive:** puts up with difficult circumstances in foreign countries without complaint
- feels patronised by **Mrs. Croft** at first, but grows to like and admire her
- **kind and respectful:** hands the money to Mrs. Croft personally, worries about her, concerned about Mala and dutiful towards her
- **likes routines:** gradually feels at home in Boston due to the routine he shares with Mrs. Croft, feels disturbed by Mala's presence in his life
- feels he has adapted to **American way of life**, but also cherishes **Indian traditions** (e. g. eating rice with his hands, speaking Bengali)
- **proud of his achievements**

Mala

- Indian woman aged 27 at the time of her arranged marriage
- well-educated and good at housekeeping, but not considered beautiful, which is why she **has to accept** a marriage to a man living on a foreign continent
- finds it **hard to adapt**, both to foreign customs and to her husband
- **tries hard to please**, but only feels emotionally attached to her husband after visiting Mrs. Croft
- later, very **close and loving relationship** with her husband and son and **well-integrated** into American life with Indian traditions

Mrs. Croft

- very small, fierce-looking woman
- **tough:** lives alone at the age of 103
- former piano teacher
- **commanding, eccentric and old-fashioned:** very strict ideas on morality and her boarders' behaviour

- values **kindness and respectful behaviour:** grateful for narrator's considerate behaviour, recognises Mala's efforts

Helen

- Mrs. Croft's daughter, aged 68
- rather **unemotional/pragmatic** approach towards her mother

3.4 Language and symbols

Title

- The narrator has lived on three different continents (Asia, Europe and North America). He has **found his place** in the USA and wants to grow old there.
- The title is also connected to the leitmotif of the moon landing (see below) in that the narrator's final feeling that he has arrived is seen as an **achievement**.

Example

"Whenever [my son] is discouraged, I tell him that if I can survive on three continents, then there is no obstacle he cannot conquer."

Leitmotif of the American moon landing

- The narrator arrives in the USA on **20 July, 1969**, the day of the American moon landing.
- In the 1960s, space was seen as the "**new frontier**", i. e. unknown territory, which only stood open to the most adventurous travellers.
- Although on a much smaller scale, the narrator **compares the moon landing with his own voyage to the USA**. For him, finding a home on a new continent is also a tremendous achievement.

Example

"While the astronauts, heroes forever, spent mere hours on the moon, I have remained in this new world for nearly thirty years. I know that my achievement is quite ordinary. I am not the only man to seek his fortune far from home, and certainly I am not the first. Still, there are times I am bewildered by each mile I have travelled, each meal I have eaten, each person I have known, each room in which I have slept. As ordinary as it all appears, there are times when it is beyond my imagination."

- On the other hand, the **routine conversation** between the narrator and Mrs. Croft also centres around the moon landing and the American flag on the moon. So, despite its spectacular nature, the moon landing is connected to the narrator's first feeling of home in the new country.

Detailed sensory impressions (during Mala's first days in the US)

Examples

visual: "Her thin brown arms were stacked with gold bracelets, a small red circle was painted on her forehead, and the edges of her feet were tinted with a decorative red dye."

haptic: "both [pullovers] were tight under the arms"

olfactory: "I still was not used to coming home to an apartment that smelled of steamed rice […] to the fragrance of the coconut oil she rubbed every other night into her scalp"

auditory: "the delicate sound her bracelets made as she moved about the apartment"

- The detailed descriptions illustrate the awkwardness between the couple because the narrator perceives **Mala's presence as exotic, strange and uncomfortable.**
- Even though both come from India, there is a **culture gap** between the narrator and his wife: he is already accustomed to the American way of life, while Mala is deeply rooted in Indian practices.
- Interestingly, the **connection to his original culture** does not make the narrator feel more at home, but instead **more separate from Mala**. Only when the couple gets closer do they also seem to find a **good balance** between Bengali customs and their American way of life.

Sari

- When the narrator sees a woman in a sari stumbling because of a dog, this makes him **dread the responsibility** of caring for Mala.
- **Mala's insecurity** is shown by her covering her head with her sari, even at home, although her husband tells her that "[i]t doesn't matter here".
- Despite the attire of a sari being foreign to Mrs. Croft, she recognises Mala as being "a perfect lady" (**intercultural understanding**).

Short stories – Putting down roots

The focus of this unit of short stories is on **cross-cultural encounters**. The short stories look at how migrants succeed in **integrating** into the society of their destination country, at **obstacles** that have to be overcome and at **failures** that have to be endured.

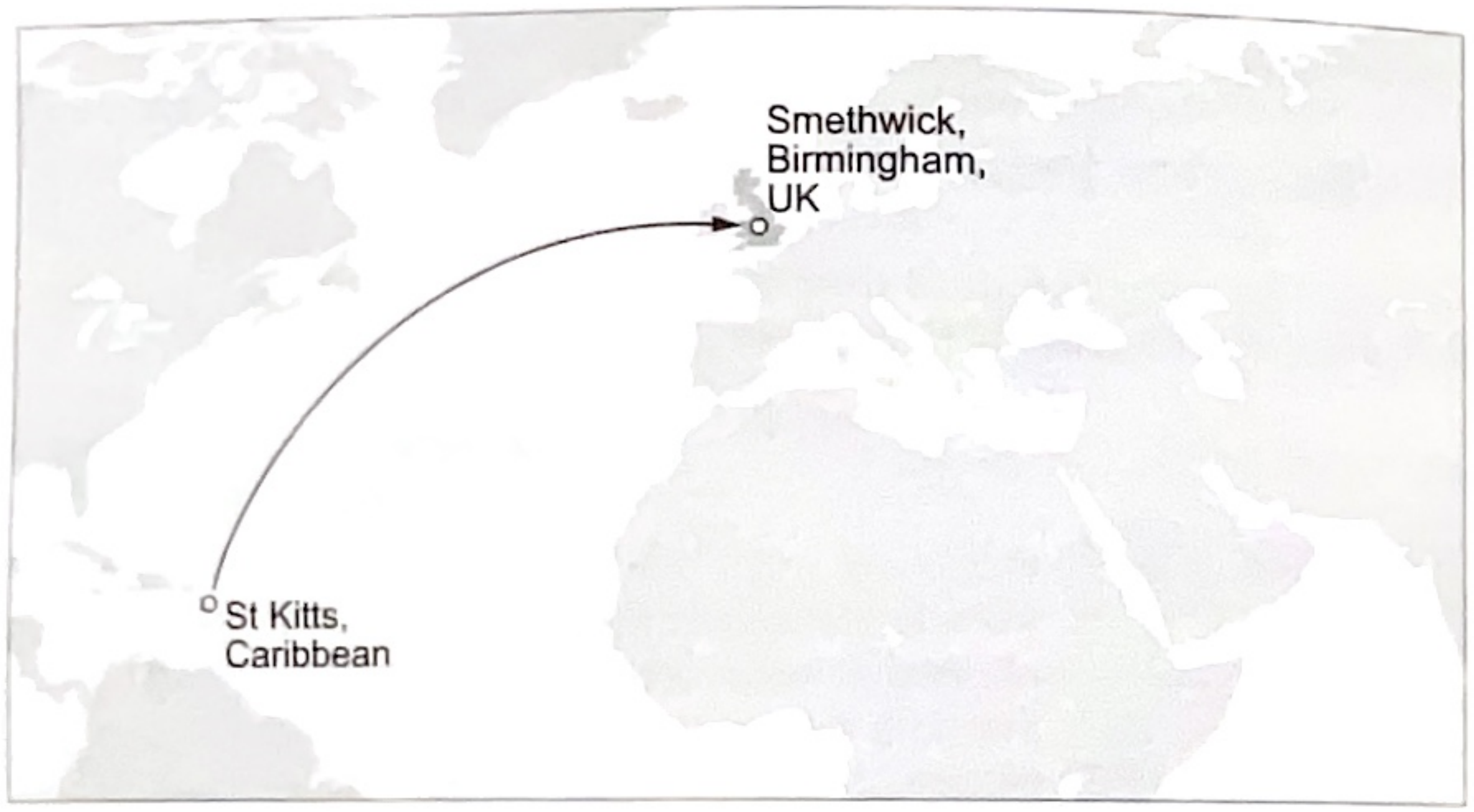
1 "Exterior Paint"

1.1 Key facts about the short story

	Background information
Malcolm X	Malcolm X (1925–1965) was an African American Muslim minister and civil rights leader. He did actually visit Marshall Street in Smethwick on 12 February, 1965. At that time, the street was symbolic of racial tension. Residents wanted the local government to buy all rented houses and expel non-White people.
segregation	= the idea of keeping various groups of the population apart and treating them differently Until the second half of the 20th century, segregation according to race was practised in several countries. While segregation was never codified in the UK (in contrast to the Jim Crow laws in the USA or apartheid in South Africa), an informal system of segregation (e. g. a colour bar in British pubs) was quite common.

- **author:** Kit de Waal, *1960, born as Mandy Theresa O'Loughlin in Birmingham, England, to an Irish mother and an African-Caribbean father
- **year of publication:** 2017
- **setting:** Marshall Street in Smethwick, near Birmingham, England
- **narrative situation:** third-person narration with Alfonse's limited view

- **narrated time:** about two days in the present; a few months in 1964/1965
- **structure:** the present as narrative framework for memories of 1964/1965
- **type of migration:** economic migration (planned to be only for a limited amount of time)
- **migration route:** St Kitts, Caribbean → Smethwick near Birmingham, UK



1.2 Plot

- Alfonse leads an estate agent through his well-kept house, where everything reminds him of his late wife, Lillian.
- The estate agent, Mr Baxter, says he will get a good price for the house but should paint the peeling green front door red.
- When Alfonse paints the door the next day, he has a chat with his neighbour, Mr Kang, and then remembers how he met his wife in 1964, shortly after he came to the UK from St Kitts in the Caribbean.
    - They meet at the Blue Gate pub, where Lillian and her sister work as barmaids.
    - Lillian tells Alfonse in a kind way that as a Black person he can only enter the smoke room, not the lounge.

    - On the way home from the pub, Lillian catches up with Alfonse to bring him the hat he has left behind.
    - They banter and give each other a kiss goodbye on the cheek, but Lillian tells Alfonse to keep quiet about it because her mother is prejudiced against Black men.
    - After six weeks, Lillian suggests slipping out of her bedroom and coming to Alfonse's house at night.
    - This works for three months until Lillian tells Alfonse that her mother knows about them. Alfonse is afraid of what might happen to him in the increasingly more openly racist environment.
    - When he tells Lillian that they have to be more careful, she is upset and leaves.
    - Neither sleeping nor working the next day, Alfonse wants Lillian back.
    - He notices a crowd at the top of the road and cannot believe his eyes when he sees that Malcolm X has come to his street.
    - Inspired by Malcolm X's calm confidence despite the jeers and insults shouted at him, Alfonse dresses up, picks up Lillian from the bar and rushes with her to her mother, whom he tells that they will be getting married.
- Alfonse plans to finish painting the door the next day and to invite the Kangs over to say goodbye to the neighbourhood.
- He finishes his rum by raising his glass to Lillian and Malcolm X.

1.3 Characters

Alfonse Maynard

- Black man from St Kitts, Caribbean, who immigrated to the UK in 1964
- widowed, has an adult daughter
- not very attached to the woman he left behind in the Caribbean
- homesick and not used to British customs until he meets Lillian
- **afraid of getting into trouble:** accused of cowardice because he does not want to defend his relationship with Lillian

- **insecure:** thinks that Lillian might have forgotten him after Christmas
- finally **calm, proud and convinced** when confronting Lillian's mother
- **melancholic** and in mourning for his beloved wife
- **truly loved Lillian:** still sensitive when it comes to Lillian (does not like the memory of her being called "cheap"), was prepared to take on Lillian's ideas and advice (buying the house, many items of furniture, contact with the neighbours, etc.)
- **private, reserved:** does not like to have Mr Baxter in his bedroom
- **handyman:** paints the door himself

Lillian

- described as blonde, with a "good shape" and an "easy smile"
- Alfonse's late wife
- dies of a stroke
- **unprejudiced, open-minded, friendly:** does not endorse segregation wholeheartedly, despite being from the "posh" part of the street, curious about the Black men moving in, friendly to the neighbours
- **self-confident and funny:** she is the one who initiates the relationship between herself and Alfonse and also the one who wants to make it public
- **demands loyalty,** but is also **sympathetic:** angry when Alfonse does not defend their relationship, but forgives him easily

Minor characters

- **The Kang family:** Alfonse's neighbours, who are probably Asian; a couple with two girls; on friendly terms with Alfonse
- **Mike Baxter:** estate agent Alfonse calls in to sell his house
- **Lillian's mother:** violently opposed to Alfonse and Lillian's relationship; member of a protest group that is campaigning to keep Marshall Street White

1.4 Language and symbols

Title

- **literal meaning:** A new colour – red – will brighten up the battered green door and make it look more attractive to buyers.
- **symbolic meaning:** People like Lillian's mother judge Alfonse by the colour of his skin (his "exterior colour"), without knowing his character.
- Just as Mr Baxter thinks that a newly painted red door will sell the house better, Alfonse **dresses up** to face Lillian's mother.

Example

"Presentation is everything."

Tone

- The tone **varies** depending on what the part of the story is about.
- **Mr Baxter** talks in a very **matter-of-fact** way, with little sensitivity to Alfonse's reason for selling the house.

Example

"Good, good. You'll see a handsome return on your investment then Mr. Maynard."

- When Alfonse remembers **the time he fell in love with Lillian**, the tone is **emotional**.

Example

"The being careful bit is harder than they expect. Sometimes, on a dark night, they twist suddenly into an entry between the terraced houses and kiss for so long that it's all Alfonse can do not to ravage Lillian there and then. He feels her slender body beneath her coat, the soft pressure of her bosom, her heart against his and he wants her like food."

Malcolm X

- On a political level, Malcolm X stands for the necessity to **fight against rampant racism.**
- On a personal level, Malcolm X is Alfonse's inspiration "to **stand up and be a man**".
- In Alfonse's case, the political and personal level **intermingle**.

2 "The Embassy of Cambodia"

2.1 Key facts about the short story

Background information

Khmer Rouge	A Communist regime that held power in Cambodia from 1975 to 1979. During that time, perceived political opponents as well as ethnic minorities were persecuted and killed in large numbers (1.5 to 2 million victims, 25 % of the Cambodian population). The Khmer Rouge ideology was strongly biased against professional and urban people, forcing many of them into agriculture instead.
genocide in Rwanda	In 1994, the Rwandan ethnic group called the Hutus killed around 800,000 to 1 million people (mainly Tutsis, but also Hutus who resisted the regime).

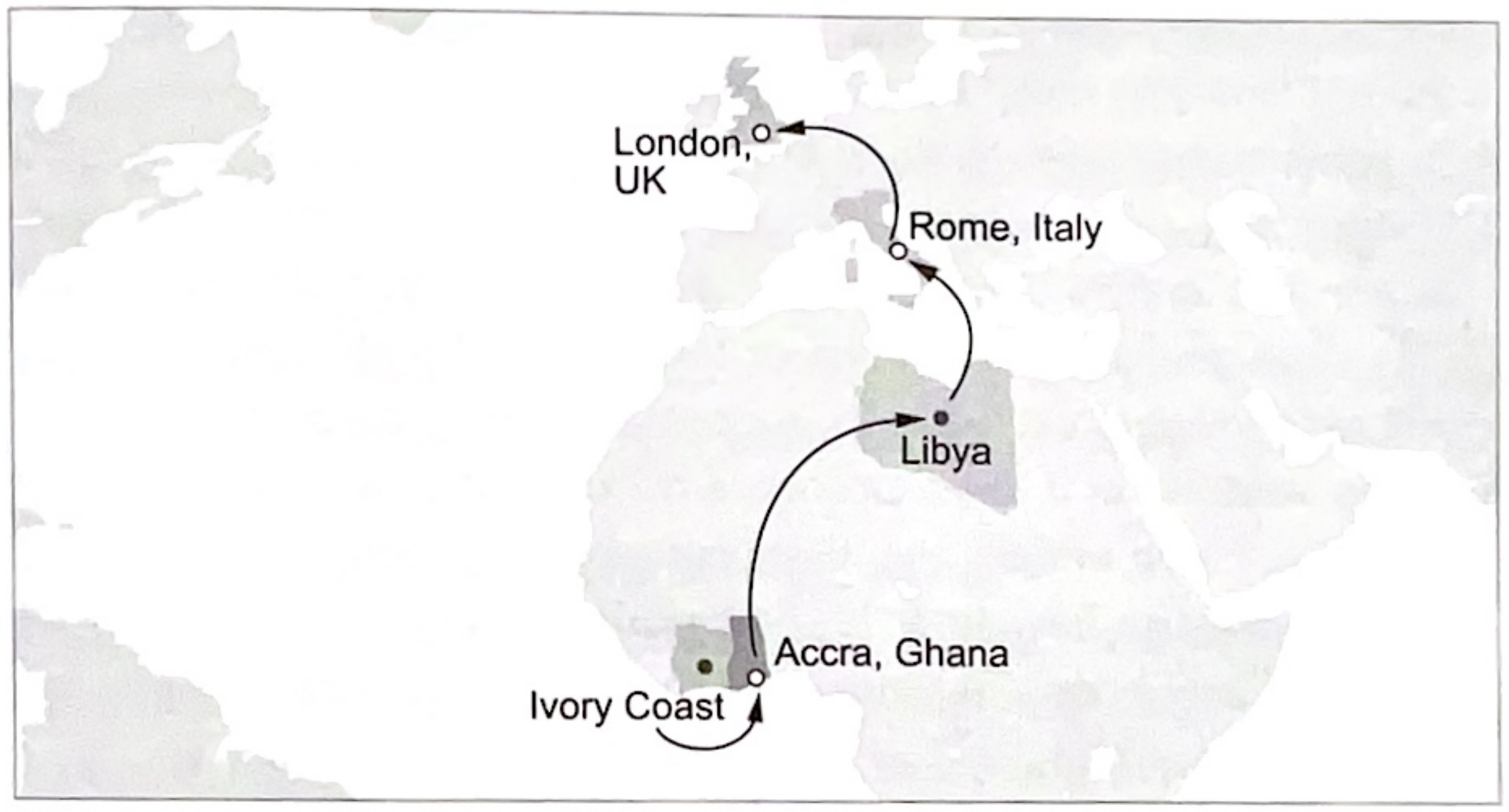
- **author:** Zadie Smith, *1975, born in Willesden, London, to a Jamaican mother and English father
- **year of publication:** 2013
- **setting:** mainly Willesden, a multicultural neighbourhood in the northwest of London (also Accra, Ghana, and Rome, Italy, which are stations on Fatou's migration journey)
- **narrative situation:** two narrative perspectives:
  - third-person narrative (Fatou's point of view)
  - first-person (partly even first-person plural) narrative: claiming to represent the people of Willesden, later identified as an elderly person living opposite the Embassy of Cambodia (somehow detached commentary on the events around the Embassy and Fatou's life, but also implicating the reader through astute observations and clever questions)

Example

"Surely there is something to be said for drawing a circle around our attention and remaining within that circle. But how large should this circle be?"

- **narrated time:** a few weeks in 2012 (with occasional flashbacks in Fatou's recollections)

- **structure:** the story is divided into short chapters that are named after the scores in a badminton match (0–1 to 0–21); there are chapters focusing on Fatou, those offering more general views on Willesden, the Embassy of Cambodia and human nature, and chapters that combine both plotlines; both the beginning and end are narrated by the "we"-narrator and centre around the Embassy
- **type of migration:** probably economic migration
- **migration route:** Ivory Coast → Accra, Ghana → Libya → Rome, Italy → London, UK



2.2 Plot

- The narrator begins the story by describing the Embassy of Cambodia and its unusual setting in the suburban area of Willesden.
- Fatou, an immigrant from the Ivory Coast, lives in the neighbourhood with the Derawals, for whom she works as a housemaid, but gets neither payment nor recognition from her employers.
- Fatou passes the Embassy of Cambodia every Monday, when she goes swimming clandestinely at the health centre next door using the Derawals' guest cards.
- Fatou is intrigued by the Embassy, particularly by the badminton match that is regularly played behind its walls and by the people coming to and fro.

- In a conversation with her Nigerian friend, Andrew, Fatou asks whether Africans are born to suffer. Andrew responds by recounting human suffering in other parts of the world and by referring to the Christian faith.
- At the Derawals', Fatou saves the youngest child, Asma, from choking on a marble. Mr. Derawal thanks her without looking into her eyes and Mrs. Derawal only asks her about dinner.
- While swimming, Fatou remembers her roughly two years at the Carib Beach Hotel in Accra, Ghana, where European tourists were condescending and exploitative towards the staff. In her last month there, Fatou was raped by a Russian tourist.
- In another conversation with Andrew, Fatou discusses people's different reactions to human tragedies depending on how used to suffering they are: in contrast to the drowning of nine children in the Ghanaian sea, which was more or less accepted with silence, the accident of a young cyclist in Rome caused even strangers to cry.
- When working as a toilet cleaner at a local Catholic school for girls in Rome, Fatou noticed the disappearance of a young Bengali street artist. Realising how little he had made her cry. It also made her aware of how poor and vulnerable the young man was, despite her former envy of him.
- When Fatou gets home from swimming, she asks about Asma, but Mrs. Derawal reacts impatiently and tries to downplay Fatou's role in saving her.
- Fatou invites Andrew to go swimming with her.
- The same evening, Fatou is fired by Mrs. Derawal for no evident reason.
- When Fatou asks for her passport, Mrs. Derawal says she does not have it, but later it is pushed under Fatou's door.
- Fatou phones Andrew for help and he invites her to stay at his place and offers her support with finding a new job.
- Having four hours to kill before meeting Andrew, Fatou goes to the health club, this time without smiling or showing gratitude towards the girl at the desk.
- After swimming, Fatou waits at the bus stop opposite the Embassy of Cambodia and watches the motion of the shuttlecock.

2.3 Characters

Fatou

- immigrant from the **Ivory Coast** who works as a **housemaid** for the Derawals
- **vulnerable:** was raped at the hotel in Ghana where she worked before, is exploited and fired by the Derawals without notice
- **strong, resilient:** despite her bad experiences, she always moves on and does not see herself as a modern slave although she could be described as one (even the name Fatou means "the one who can abstain/endure")
- also **bitter** and **resentful:** rebels against the Derawals by stealing their guest passes for the health centre; does not want to thank the lady at the reception desk any longer
- **proud:** does not like her father working as a servant; would not sell her body to tourists; sees through the arrogance of the Derawal children
- very **interested** in **and critical** of the world
- partly **naive Christian beliefs:** feels "sinful" and hopes that her baptism will cleanse her and make her perpetually happy
- on the other hand, **sees herself as more mature** than Andrew, whom she regards as being like a child

Andrew

- Fatou's friend from church, who likes her romantically (feelings not reciprocated)
- three years older than Fatou
- from **Nigeria**
- "**not elegant**" (as seen by Fatou): "professorial glasses", "chubby face", "baby fat", "struggling mustache", "clammy, high-smelling body"
- **ambitious, wants to progress:** works as a night guard in the city and is studying for a part-time business degree
- **religious, Christian mindset:** tries not to be angry, "a dreamer" in Fatou's opinion

- **generous, kind and chivalrous:** treats Fatou at the Tunisian café, wants to give her his umbrella, lets Fatou sleep in his room after she gets fired; never offensive or pushy, despite his attraction to Fatou
- also a **bit pompous and patronising:** likes to lecture (sometimes even passing on incorrect information, e. g. the number of victims of the Holocaust), does not want to admit that he can hardly swim

the Derawals

- **wealthy Asian family** with three children: Julie (17), Faizul (15), Asma (10)
- owners of two minimarkets
- **disrespectful and ungrateful** towards Fatou
- **hypocritical:** cannot stand being in Fatou's debt (also see Andrew's statement about "**Big Man Policies**": "But if the Big Men see that *you* see that *they* are weak they have no choice but to destroy you"), dishonest about Fatou's passport

Narrator

- born in Willesden
- living opposite the Embassy of Cambodia
- **ambiguous/remains a bit of a mystery:** bored and/or not content with turning a blind eye to events in the area
- **sarcastic, insightful** comments (comparable to the **chorus in a Greek tragedy**)

2.4 Language and symbols

Title

- On the one hand, the Embassy's **connection to the Khmer Rouge regime** shows **people's eclectic interest in world history:** only the most sensational crimes remain in the collective consciousness and even those are usually only remembered in a detached, disimpassioned way.

- On the other, one of the cruel mottoes of the Khmer Rouge, "To keep you is no benefit. To destroy you is no loss", could also be attributed to the Derawals' **cruelty and indifference** towards Fatou.
- The Embassy of Cambodia is also an important structural element and motif in the short story: on the one hand, it is often connected to the story's **background narrator**, while on the other, it triggers Fatou's interest in politics and serves as a **starting point for political, philosophical or theological discussions,** such as:
  - Are Africans born to suffer?
  - Why are some tragedies more present in the collective consciousness than others?
  - How much distance should one maintain from the suffering of others?
- Symbolically, it furthermore shows the **aloofness of a privileged elite with regard to Fatou's suffering** (and that of other immigrants): it is surrounded by impenetrable walls, the people Fatou normally observes there do not seem to be Cambodian but instead to belong to a privileged middle class, its location in a residential area seems random and senseless, etc.

Badminton match

- The badminton match being played inside the Embassy is also a symbol of the **world's indifference towards Fatou's situation** (and that of other immigrants): she can only observe it from the outside; it is not moved or changed by anyone or anything.
- Furthermore, it symbolises **Fatou's helplessness:** like the shuttlecock, Fatou is merely tossed around without being able to influence anything in her life and give it a new direction.
- **Onomatopoeic repetitions** stress both the **deadening routine** of Fatou's daily life and the **power structures** at play; one player clearly dominates the game (cf. the one-sided score in the chapter titles).

Examples

"Instead the other player with his vicious reliability (Fatou had long ago decided that both players were men), caught the shuttlecock as it began to drift and sent it back to his opponent – another deadly, downward smash."

"Pock, smash. Pock, smash. As if one player could imagine only a violent conclusion and the other only a hopeful return."

Swimming

- That Fatou has taught herself to swim can be seen in a figurative sense: **she can keep her head above water** against all odds.
- Swimming is Fatou's **salvation**. Her swimming stroke is even compared to the badminton player's "smash", although Fatou can be more easily associated with the defensive side of the game.

> Examples
>
> "On Monday, Fatou went swimming. She paused to watch the badminton. She thought that the arm that delivered the smashes must make a movement similar to the one she made in the pool, with her clumsy yet effective front crawl."
>
> "Walking out into the cold gray, Fatou felt a sense of brightness, of being washed clean, that neither the weather nor her new circumstances could dim."

- Yet the fact that she is different from the health centre's usual clientele and that she can only go there by practising deceit show Fatou's status as an **underprivileged outsider**. This is similarly true for the pool in Accra, which was reserved for the guests, not the hotel staff.
- **Contrasting** the "rough gray sea" where Fatou learnt to swim (and which killed the Ghanaian children) with the "warm, tranquil" pool water underlines notions of **privilege and discrimination**.

God and the Devil

- **God** and religion are closely connected to Fatou's not losing **hope**. Even back in Ghana, though not a Christian herself yet, Fatou cherished the baptism ritual at the hotel pool.
- Fatou even has quite **exaggerated hopes** when, after her baptism, she is disappointed that she still feels anger and sadness.
- Due to her experiences, Fatou often sees the strong influence of the **Devil** (in contrast to Andrew's more optimistic outlook).

> Example
>
> "[...] Tell me, why would God choose us especially for suffering when we, above all others, praise his name? Africa is the fastest-growing Christian continent! Just think about it for a minute! It doesn't even make sense!"
>
> "But it's not him," Fatou said quietly, looking over Andrew's shoulder at the rain beating on the window. "It's the Devil."

- Fatou sees **the Devil as evil personified** in people (her rapist, Mrs. Derawal) to try and make sense of their behaviour.

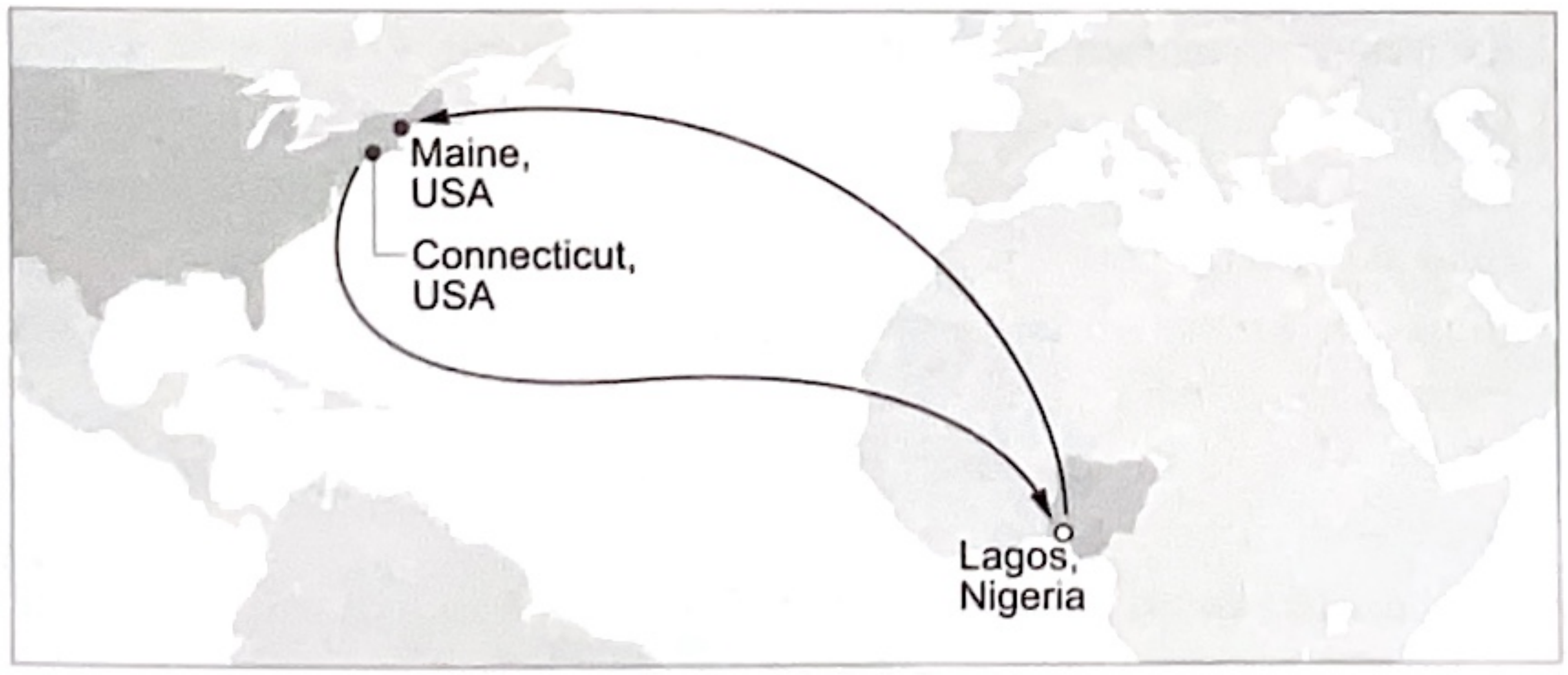
3 "The Thing around Your Neck"

3.1 Key facts about the short story

Background information

Nigeria	With over 215 million inhabitants, Nigeria has the largest population and economy in Africa. However, owing to an unequal distribution of wealth, about 40 % of the population live below the poverty line. Due to their dissatisfaction with the political and economic climate in the country, many highly-skilled Nigerians leave their home, especially to go to the USA. The country's biggest ethnic groups are the predominantly Muslim Hausa and Fulani, the mainly Christian Igbo, and the Yorubas, who include members of different religious groups.

- **author:** Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *1977 in Nigeria
- **year of publication:** 2004
- **setting:** Lagos, Nigeria – Maine, USA – Connecticut, USA
- **narrative situation:** second-person narration (narrative "you"): Akunna's point of view
- **narrated time:** several months, probably in the early 2000s
- **structure:** more or less chronological account of Akunna's time in the US
- **type of migration:** economic migration (Green Card)
- **migration route:** Lagos, Nigeria → Maine, USA → Connecticut, USA → Lagos, Nigeria



3.2 Plot

- The Nigerian protagonist Akunna wins a Green Card in America's visa lottery after her "uncle" applies for one for everyone in the family.
- All friends and relatives expect her to achieve the American Dream and material wealth.
- Akunna first moves in with her "uncle" and his family in Maine. He helps her to find a job as a cashier and enrols her at the local community college.
- She is confronted with strange comments and questions about her home country and culture.
- When her "uncle" tries to abuse her sexually, she takes a Greyhound bus to the last stop in a small town in Connecticut.
- There she works as a moonlighting waitress and can no longer afford to go to college because she has to pay rent for the shabby room where she now lives.
- Akunna regularly sends money home to Nigeria, but never writes any letters because she feels that she is not being successful and cannot fulfil her relatives' expectations regarding gifts.
- A customer with knowledge of ethnic groups in Africa is very interested in her and asks her to go out with him.
- After saying "no" a few times, Akunna finally agrees.
- She enjoys their relationship and they grow close, but Akunna also feels misunderstood by her boyfriend and is often repulsed by his complacency and sense of entitlement.
- They have a row when Akunna's boyfriend does not make it clear to a Chinese restaurant owner that they are a couple.
- Other contentious issues between them are her boyfriend buying her presents all the time, her not wanting them to visit Nigeria together (and her home country just becoming another of the countries he thinks he knows about) and him behaving ungratefully towards his parents in Akunna's opinion.
- When Akunna finally sends her address to her relatives back home, she learns that her father has died.
- She decides to go back to Nigeria alone and does not respond to her boyfriend's request to come back to him.

3.3 Characters

Akunna

- 22-year-old Nigerian woman
- has three siblings, **dutiful** but also **close relationship** to her family
- **false expectations** before going to America
- **ashamed** when she does not fulfil them
- **exasperated** because of the (indirect) racism she is confronted with
- **proud:** does not accept her "uncle's" advances, ashamed of her father's grovelling attitude, suspicious of her future boyfriend's interest
- **feels misunderstood and repelled by her boyfriend:** cannot forgive him his privileged outlook on life, of which he is not even aware

Akunna's boyfriend

- only referred to as "he"
- White American in his late 20s
- senior at university after having **travelled** for some years (mainly to Africa and Asia)
- comes from a **wealthy family**
- **values independence:** does not want to be "bought" by his parents
- **generous,** but could be seen as **condescending**
- **well-read** and **open-minded**
- criticised for his arrogant **outsider view** of Africa and Asia
- **not aware of his privilege**, which he seems to take for granted
- **invested** in his and Akunna's relationship

Minor characters

- **Akunna's "uncle":** not related by blood; pragmatic "give-and-take" attitude to life in America; expects sexual favours from Akunna
- **Akunna's family:** live in Lagos; think Akunna will become rich soon after entering the USA; ask her to send them presents, but also seem to miss her (mother answers Akunna's letter very fast)
- **Juan:** Akunna's friendly, but shady boss in Connecticut
- **boyfriend's parents:** very open-minded and friendly towards Akunna, but, according to their son, pressuring

3.4 Language and symbols

Title

- It is reminiscent of the **idiom of "a millstone around someone's neck"**, which refers to a difficult problem or responsibility that seems impossible to solve or get rid of.
- It is symbolic of **Akunna's depressed emotions** due to not living up to her family's expectations and not feeling at home in America.

> Example
>
> "Nobody knew where you were, because you told no one. Sometimes you felt invisible and tried to walk through your room wall into the hallway, and when you bumped into the wall, it left bruises on your arms. […] At night, something would wrap itself around your neck, something that very nearly choked you before you fell asleep."

- It could be interpreted as **a hangman's noose**, because for Akunna it feels like there is no way out of her predicament.
- As the attachment to her boyfriend grows, the thing around Akunna's neck starts "to loosen, to let go". So, in other words, her **feelings of loneliness and depression** seem to ease.
- However, in the end, Akunna does not seem to be able to feel free or that she can be her true self in America. She remains **choked by her family's expectations**, the (indirect) **racism** around her and her **homesickness**.

The narrative "you"

- On the one hand, the narrative "you" serves to **draw the reader into the story** because it creates the impression of being directly part of the events.
- On the other, it also seems to **generalise the information**, presenting it as something that could happen to anyone. This impression is corroborated by the fact that important characters, like Akunna's boyfriend, are never mentioned by name.
- Another effect of the narrative "you" is that it seems to **detach the protagonist from her experiences**. They seem to happen to her rather than her being in control and playing an active part in shaping her life.

Use of pronouns

- Apart from the "**you**" that represents the protagonist Akunna, "**he**" and "**they**" are the pronouns most commonly used throughout the short story. This creates a kind of **separation and contrast** instead of an inclusive environment.
- This becomes especially obvious in the frequent **parallel sentence structures** beginning with "you" and "he" respectively and mirroring the back and forth in an argument. They show how Akunna and her boyfriend cannot really understand each other, how they live parallel lives and have no "we", no common story and no future.

> Examples
>
> "He said he had taken a couple of years off to discover himself and travel, mostly to Africa and Asia. You asked him where he ended up finding himself and he laughed. You did not laugh."
>
> "He said you were wrong to call him self-righteous. You said he was wrong to call only the poor Indians in Bombay the real Indians."

Contrasts / Paradoxes

- There are many instances of contrasts and seemingly paradoxical statements that show the **intercultural misunderstandings** between Akunna and the people she meets in America.

> Example
>
> "You wanted to write about the rich people who wore shabby clothes and tattered sneakers, who looked like the night watchmen in front of the large compounds in Lagos. You wanted to write that rich Americans were thin and poor Americans were fat"

- These also show the **(indirect) racism** Akunna encounters. People who exoticise Africa and Africans are as prejudiced as those condemning them. They do not see them in all their facets, but only from a certain **American-centred perspective**.

> Example
>
> "white people who liked Africa too much and those who liked Africa too little were the same – condescending."

Open ending

- While Akunna apparently affirms that she will come back to America after visiting her family in Nigeria because she does not want to lose her Green Card, she does not really answer her boyfriend's question about coming back to him and **fully committing to life in America**.
- Her experiences throughout the short story seem to indicate quite the contrary: America is nothing like Akunna expected it to be and she is tired of not being understood there.
- The open ending and the two possible paths of Akunna's future (staying in the USA and committing to her boyfriend or not doing so) are already **foreshadowed by the two strips** Akunna finds in her **fortune cookie** at Chang's restaurant. The fact that the strips are **blank** could indicate that there is **no decision** for her that is completely feasible: either she loses her chance of a better future (what she still considers the Green Card to be) or she loses part of herself.

Short stories – Negotiating identity

For second-generation immigrants, the **search for identity** is often not easy, as they might feel **torn between different cultures**. This unit of short stories focuses on young protagonists whose identities are shaped by the fact that they are second-generation immigrants.

1 "Green"

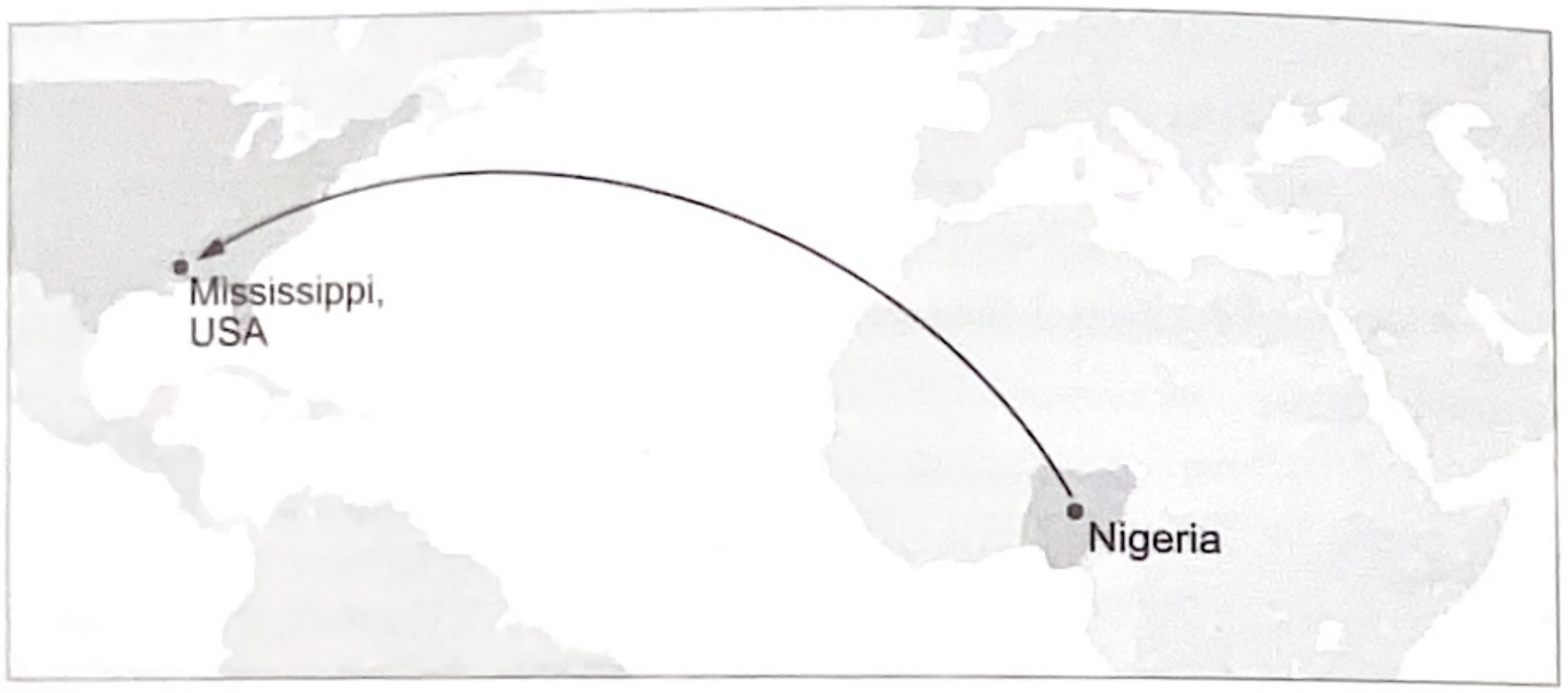
1.1 Key facts about the short story

Background information

Mardi Gras	The Mardi Gras festivities are very famous, particularly in New Orleans. They form part of Carnival and are celebrated with colourful costumes and in parades that move through the streets and also represent the cultural diversity of the city. Common activities include the throwing (and catching) of "Mardi Gras beads" (usually in the colours of gold, green and purple), the eating of King Cakes (cakes in which little figurines are hidden that make their finder "king or queen of the day") as well as general partying and dancing.
Presidential election 2004	In 2004, the Democratic candidate John Kerry opposed the incumbent Republican president George W. Bush. The latter won with around 53 % of the votes. During the election campaign, several attempts were made to discredit the challenger, John Kerry. Pro-life groups accused him of "killing babies" because of his pro-choice stance, for instance.

- **author:** Sefi Atta, *1964, born in Nigeria, now lives in Mississippi, USA
- **year of publication:** 2004
- **setting:** immigration office in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA – in the car – on a soccer field in Mississippi, USA

- **narrative situation:** first-person narration (9-year-old unnamed protagonist)
- **narrated time:** one day in the present, flashbacks
- **structure:** events presented in chronological order (frequently interrupted by flashbacks)
- **type of migration:** probably economic migration (only relevant regarding the girl's parents; she herself was apparently born in the USA)
- **migration route:** Nigeria → Mississippi, USA



1.2 Plot

- An unnamed nine-year-old girl is bored while waiting with her parents at the immigration office in New Orleans, where they want to apply for their Green Cards.
- The girl observes the diverse groups of people present and contemplates the various experiences you can have when living in a multicultural society, like reading signs in different languages, having children in her class from various backgrounds or taking Spanish lessons.
- She hopes to be back home in Mississippi for her soccer game at six p.m.
- She starts associating the colour green with daily matters.
- She also remembers her parents' struggle to become permanent residents officially. Her father, for example, was not able to go to his father's funeral in Nigeria while he still had insecure status.

- The girl herself is an American citizen and also makes a point of feeling American.
- After her parents have given their address, had their thumbprints taken and have been reassured that their Green Cards will be on the way to them, her father suggests going to the Mardi Gras parade in New Orleans to celebrate.
- The girl declines but remembers last year's parade.
- They drive back to Mississippi, her father talking about politics and her mother about discrimination. The girl tells them about her soccer game and they rush home.
- They arrive in time and when the girl scores a goal and her parents cheer, she feels happy and as if all of them belong.

1.3 Characters

Nine-year-old girl

- apparently **born in the USA** to Nigerian parents
- **bored and impatient:** does not grasp the full significance of her parents' visit to the immigration office; cares more about her soccer game
- sometimes **annoyed and embarrassed** by her parents: wants to fit in, behaves like a typical American (mother blames Britney Spears for her behaviour)
- **young and naive,** but also **precocious:** asks lots of questions and regards the procedure at the immigration office from a childlike perspective, but also talks down to and manipulates her parents

Example

"I'm like what, in the world right now? 'You guys,' I say. 'If you're going to live in this country you might as well get used to soccer. It's part of life. I'm American. How do you expect me to feel?' 'You know,' Dad says. 'She's right.' I can't believe he fell for that."

The girl's mother

- from Nigeria, a lecturer
- **feminist** outlook and **critical** as regards Civil Rights (e. g. for Native Americans)
- wants her daughter to be **self-confident**
- **domineering** member of the family
- according to her daughter, both she and her husband are "**predictable**" and very "**African**" in their manners

The girl's father

- from Nigeria, a doctor
- interested in **politics**, critical
- both he and his wife are **very eager** to get their Green Cards
- mostly **optimistic and cheerful**

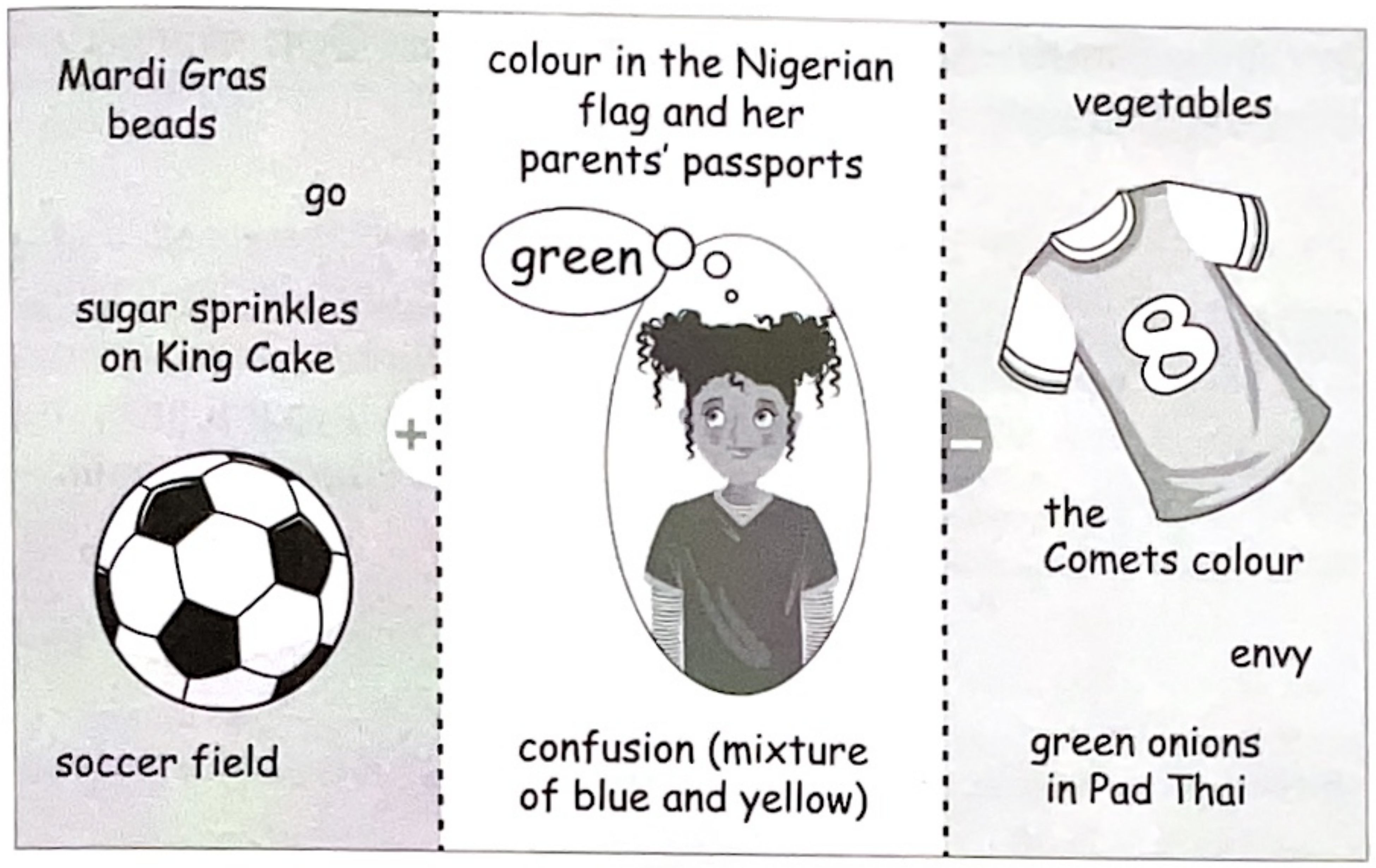
Minor characters

- **people waiting at the immigration office:** Haitian family, Hispanic and Asian people
- **pretty immigration office worker:** friendly, particularly to children, but rather uninterested in the immigrants' personal stories
- **Celeste:** the narrator's friend, with whom she has a quarrel over a boy, apparently not Black ("What's it like being African?")

1.4 Language and symbols

Title

- The colour green serves as a **leitmotif** because it is the name of the parents' permanent residence permit ("Green Card") and the protagonist associates it with different aspects of her life.
- The variety of her associations, both positive and negative, show both the **richness and complexity** of her life as a second-generation immigrant.


Mardi Gras beads
go
sugar sprinkles on King Cake
+
soccer field
colour in the Nigerian flag and her parents' passports
green
confusion (mixture of blue and yellow)
vegetables
8
–
the Comets colour
envy
green onions in Pad Thai

Perspective of a nine-year-old child

- By writing her short story from the viewpoint of a child, Sefi Atta drives her message home both **convincingly and unthreateningly**.
- Looked at superficially, the protagonist's childlike observations seem to simplify the situation, but in the end they often **reveal deeper truths**, such as the orchestrated bureaucracy at the immigration office, the complexities of navigating a multicultural country or the inconsistencies adults sometimes show in their values and behaviour.

> **Examples**
>
> "The booth curtains are purple too. They are open like a puppet show is about to begin, but real people sit behind the glass windows, stamping and checking."
>
> "Indian looking people too, like my friend Areeba who left our school because Catholic religion was confusing her."
>
> "Whenever the President comes on Mom says, 'Ugh, turn him off. That man can't string two words together.' Yet she tells me it's not right to be rude to people who can't speak English."

- The narrator's view also helps to paint a picture of perfect harmony at the end, which shows an **utopian vision of integration**.

> **Example**
>
> "This is it. Me, scoring. My mom looking like she loves soccer. My dad looking like he really loves the President. Three of us, looking like we really belong. It's better than finding the baby in King Cake, and my team hasn't even won yet."

2 "The Southside Raza Image Federation Corps of Discovery"

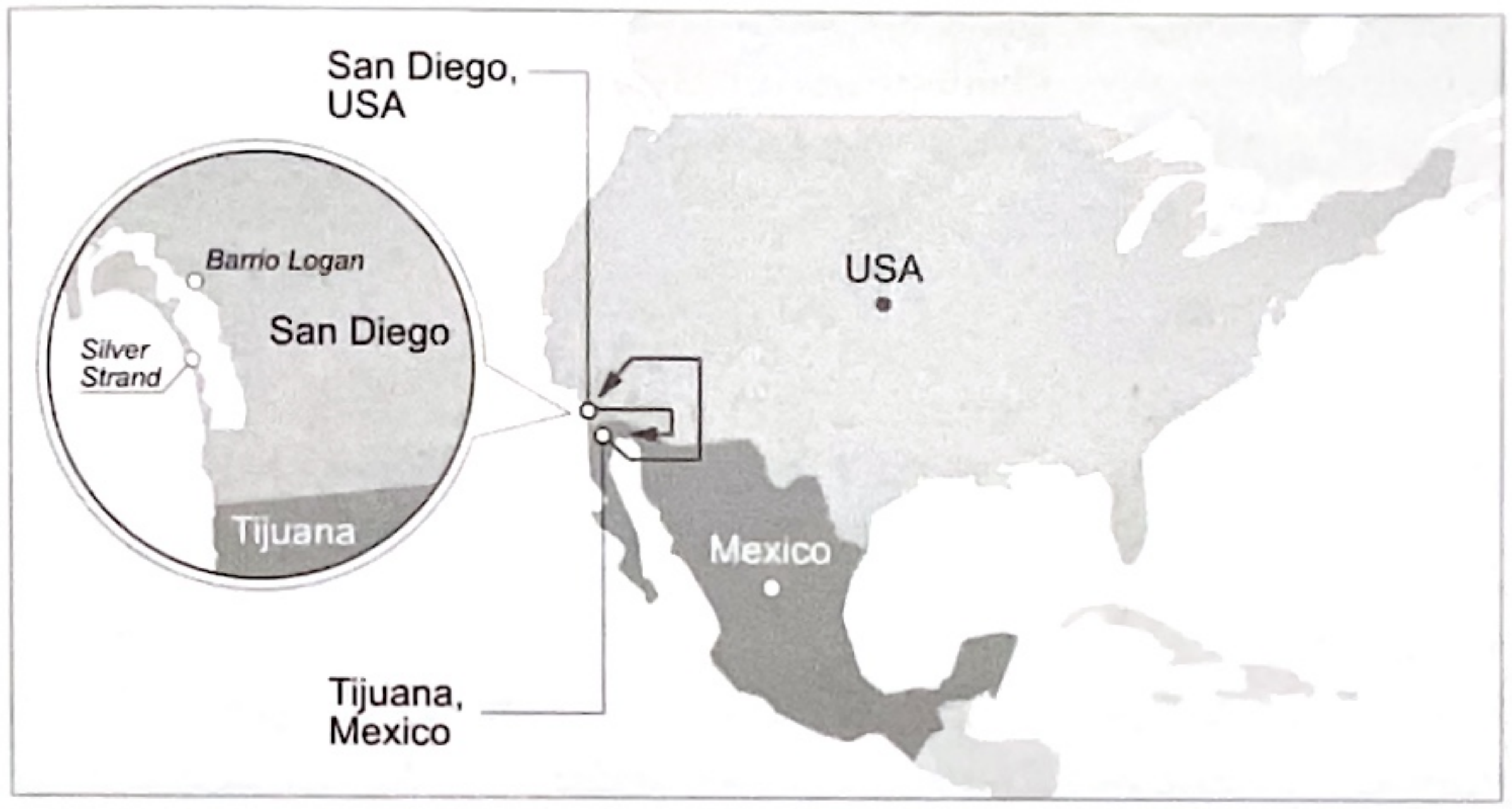
Word bank of Chicano English expressions

barrio	area, district, part of town, neighbourhood	**güey**	mate *(used to address sb)*
Chicano	male person born in the US whose family stems from Mexico	**beaner**	person of Mexican origin *(refers to sb eating beans)*
vato	(Chicano) guy, dude, bloke	**qué?**	what?
ese	mate *(used to address sb)*	**morra**	girl
Simón	yes; hell, yeah	**wetback**	illegal immigrant from Mexico
pocho **puto**	*swearwords roughly meaning an Americanised Mexican person*	**aquí nomás**	right here, just here; *also:* just hanging / getting by
gabacho	White US American person	**gringo**	*pejorative for sb from a non-Spanish-speaking country (esp. USA)*
cabro	*swearword*		

2.1 Key facts about the short story

- **author:** Luis Alberto Urrea, *1955, born in Mexico to a Mexican father and a US American mother, moved to the USA at the age of four and grew up in San Diego
- **year of publication:** 2011
- **setting:** San Diego, USA, in a Chicano neighbourhood and the wetlands surrounding it
- **narrative situation:** third-person narrative (Junior's point of view)
- **narrated time:** New Year's Day and the following day (in the present)
- **structure:** linear plot in two main parts
  - first part: set in Big Ángel's house, the car belonging to Shadow's mother, the tunnel under the roadway to the beach; introduces the reader to the neighbourhood and shows regular issues, such as drugs, gangs and violence

  - second part: set in the wetlands the next day; covers themes such as pollution, neglect and illegal immigration; deals with the extraordinary experience of Shadow's deportation
- **type of migration:** probably economic reasons (for Junior's parents), illegal immigration (in the case of Shadow's family)
- **migration route:** Mexico → San Diego, USA → Mexico



2.2 Plot

- Junior wakes up after a New Year's Eve party in Big Ángel's house.
- Shadow invites him to go for a ride to the beach and they drive to the Silver Strand together with the Sotomayor sisters, La Smiley and La Li'l Mousey.
- Junior and Shadow talk about Lewis and Clark, about whom they are supposed to read a book for their history lessons.
- While walking through a tunnel to the beach, two Mexicans provoke Shadow and they get into a fight.
- Junior kicks one of the Mexicans in the mouth.
- Riding back to their neighbourhood, Shadow is delighted and Junior is sick in the car, one of his opponent's teeth still stuck in his shoe.
- The next morning, Shadow picks Junior up to go on an outing with him in a stolen canoe.
- In the wetlands between their barrio and the Mexican border, the two paddle past a slaughterhouse in bloody water polluted with oil.

- They marvel at the flora and fauna and also see Mexicans hiding from the Border Patrol.
- A Border Patrol helicopter spots them while they are having sandwiches in the cooling pond of a power station.
- Despite Shadow's protestations of being an American citizen ("USA all the way"), the agents find out that he was born in Mexico and was brought to the USA illegally when he was an infant.
- Junior never sees Shadow again. He never reads the book about Lewis and Clark nor ever returns to the place from which the two of them started with their canoe.

2.3 Characters

Junior

- 10th grade
- **poor circumstances:** apparently not able to afford the gym
- **smart:** "Professor Junior", does the homework for his brother and his friends even though they are two years older, likes to read
- **insecure:** does not want to admit his love for books for fear of being mocked, does not feel "man enough" for La Li'l Mousey, exploited by his older brother and his friends, wants to work out in order to be less skinny
- reacts **violently**, but is not completely comfortable with it: kicks one of the Mexicans in the mouth, but vomits in the car later

Shadow García

- Junior's friend and classmate
- **outgoing and adventurous:** always up to something, does not like to be messed around with
- **proud of being American:** criticises Mexicans for only speaking Spanish, unaware that he entered the USA illegally
- **enthusiastic:** although he is not a big reader himself, Junior's tales about Lewis and Clark encourage him to pinch a canoe and suggest an outing

Minor characters

- **Big Ángel:** probably Junior and Little Ángel's father
- **Little Ángel:** Junior's older brother, bullies Junior sometimes
- **Chango:** Little Ángel's friend, also exploits Junior
- **La Smiley and La Lil' Mousey:** sisters, heavily made-up girls who accompany Shadow and Junior to the beach

2.4 Language and symbols

Title

- The **first part** of the title refers to Junior's T-shirt, which says "Southside Raza Image Federation Y QUE c/s". It alludes to a **Chicano gang** in the San Diego area.

Example

"'Lots of Chicano historical data in that shirt,' said Shadow"

- The second part of the title, "Discovery Corps", refers to Shadow and Junior exploring the area in their canoe like **Lewis and Clark**.
- Thus, the title both mirrors the general **structure** of the short story and combines the boys' **Mexican heritage** with their only partly successful **aspiration to fit in with American values.**

Mixture of languages

- The story contains a number of **Spanish and Chicano English expressions** (cf. word bank on p. 52). These authentically recreate the atmosphere of a **Chicano community**.
- The Spanish – English contrast is also seen as a **sign of belonging**.

Example

"'Dude,' said Junior. 'That's totally awesome.' 'No disrespect or nothin',' Shadow replied, 'but you're talkin' like a white boy. You a vato or a gabacho?'"

- Shadow is proud of being Chicano, but he also mocks it.

Example

Shadow shouted Junior's name, using that fake Beaner accent he enjoyed when he was mocking everybody: "WHO-nyurr!"

- For Shadow, the mixture of languages shows his **Chicano, i.e. Mexican-American, identity** (in contrast to the wetbacks' lack of belonging to the USA).

Example
"Shadow smiled. 'You come into my country and talk smack to me? Really? Really? Okay.'"

- The variety of styles also mirrors the **different ways of life which Junior seems torn between:** gang culture on the one hand and pursuing a higher education on the other. Slang and informal language prevail in the dialogues, while a more educated style of language characterises the narrative passages. This can be explained by Junior's attempts at fitting in and hiding his love for reading from the other boys.

Example
"'Dude likes to read!' was the insult they threw at him, and of course he was forced to deny it. He hid his paperbacks under his bed."

Telling names

- Junior and Shadow are nicknames that **reflect the boys' status or character**.
- The nickname "**Junior**" reflects the protagonist's **position in his family and among his peers**. He is a younger brother and Shadow repeatedly calls him "peewee" (= little one).
- **Shadow** might refer to a **tendency of getting into trouble**, with "shady" meaning dishonest or illegal. For the reader, there is also a second level to the nickname because Shadow has been living in the USA illegally for years without his knowledge. **Illegal immigrants** are commonly referred to as the "shadow population".

Lewis and Clark (US American history)

- From 1804 to 1806, Merriweather Lewis and William Clark led an expedition commissioned by President Thomas Jefferson to explore the land west of the Mississippi up to the Pacific coast. They can be seen as **early American heroes**.

- Junior and Shadow's (failed) attempt to walk in their footsteps could be seen as symbolic of the **lack of acceptance** they receive from American society.
- Similarly, there is an (ironic) allusion to US American pioneer and naturalist **Daniel Boone:** Junior thinks of Shadow as "Shadow Boone, Barrio Naturalist". Boone was a US American pioneer and naturalist, closely linked to the frontier and a highly paradoxical character, as he admired Native Americans but at the same time helped to destroy their culture. This can be seen as mirroring the contradictions in Shadow's life: he is proud of being a Chicano and fights against wetbacks while at the same time disdaining Americanised Mexicans, insisting that he is "America all the way", but in reality is an illegal Mexican immigrant.

Ecocritical aspects (symbolic meaning of the wetlands setting)

- During Junior and Shadow's excursion with the canoe, elements of nature (sometimes dead) interact with human influence, almost evoking the **atmosphere of a horror story**, like the one Junior is reading in bed (*The Stand* by Stephen King).

Example
"They maneuvered around a slime-covered shopping cart. Junior pointed out a washing machine in the water. Corduroy pants on a hillock, brittle after years in the sun."

- **Animals** are personified and seem **mighty**.

Example
"A heron raised its head and regarded them with disdain."

- **Trash and inanimate matter** is given life by personification.

Example
"the little slaughterhouse almost looked nostalgic. Occasional tides of blood and offal still pulsed out of there"

- **Pollution** reveals a strange **beauty**.

Example
"He could see rainbows of pollution and oil on the surface, and weird billows of yellow and green filth that rose from the gray bottom like small poisoned geysers."

- Richard Brautigan's book ***Trout Fishing in America*** comes up in the short story (Shadow brings Junior a copy and he already has one under his bed): it was published in 1967 and is a critique of American society with regard to aspects such as **environmental destruction and the disillusionment with the American Dream**.
- All in all, the setting of the wetlands, where the **turning point** of the short story (Shadow's illegality and his subsequent deportation) takes place, can be perfectly associated with **a paradise turned bad**.

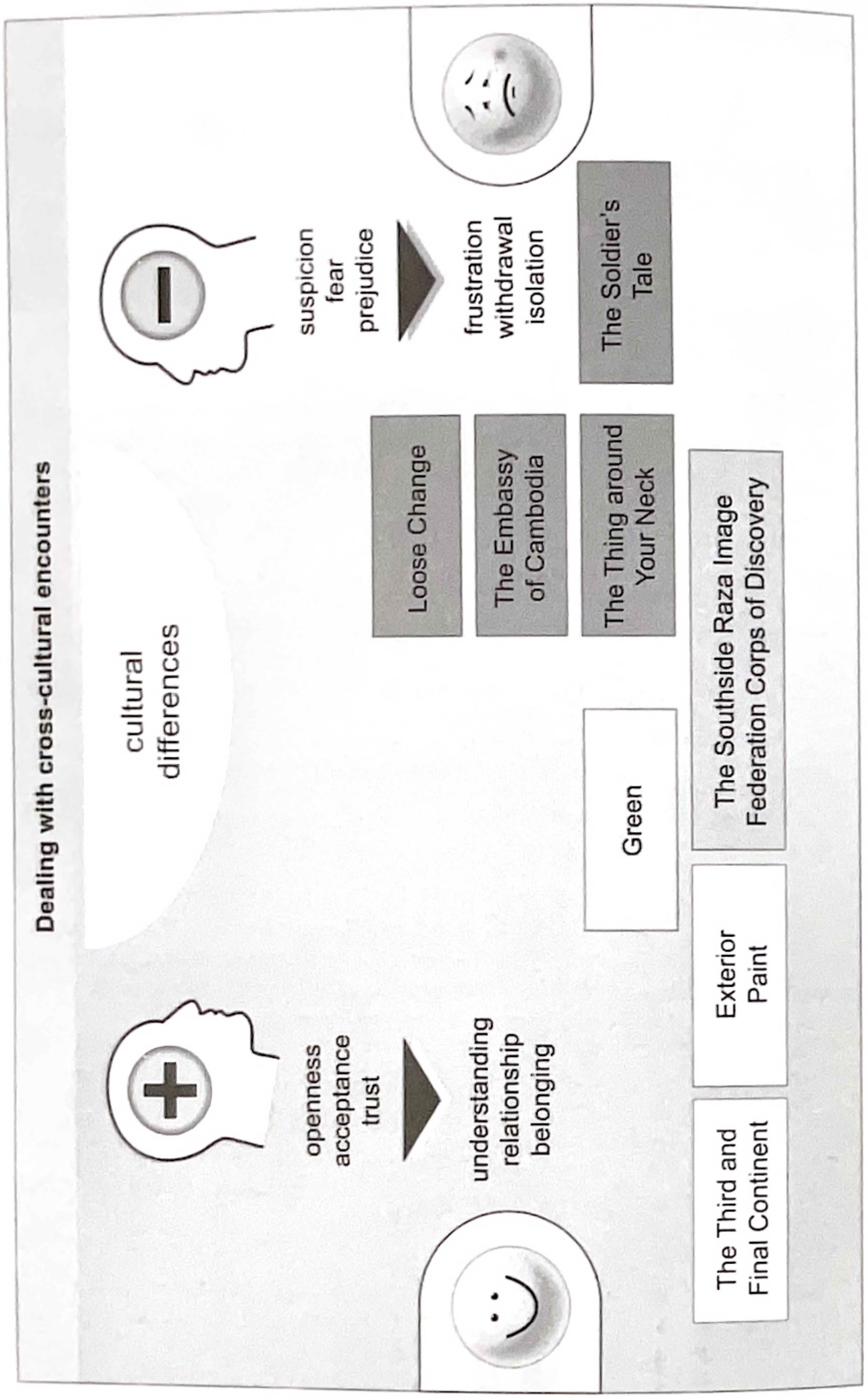
On the move – Migration and cross-cultural encounters

1 Definitions of key terms

Word bank

migration	the act of leaving one's home to settle (permanently) somewhere new
refugee	There is no official legal distinction between refugees and migrants. Often refugees are more closely defined as people who are fleeing from threatening or oppressive circumstances, while migration can take place due to a variety of reasons.
encounter	a synonym for meeting
acculturation	the process of becoming accustomed to a foreign culture (the term is sometimes seen critically because it implies that adaptation/assimilation is the preferred goal of multicultural encounters)
identity	who somebody is, what makes a person unique
Green Card	a document which legalises a foreigner's stay and allows them to work in the USA
Diversity Immigrant Visa Program (Green Card Lottery)	a programme that awards up to 50,000 immigrant visas each year; eligibility requirements include being a citizen of a country with a low rate of immigration to the US, having graduated from high school or its equivalent, having work experience, etc.

2 Dealing with cross-cultural encounters


Dealing with cross-cultural encounters
cultural differences
suspicion
fear
prejudice
frustration
withdrawal
isolation
openness
acceptance
trust
understanding
relationship
belonging
The Soldier's Tale
Loose Change
The Embassy of Cambodia
The Thing around Your Neck
The Southside Raza Image Federation Corps of Discovery
Green
Exterior Paint
The Third and Final Continent

3 Thematic connections between the short stories

3.1 The plight of refugees

The short stories exemplify the fates of countless and nameless migrants around the globe. Hardship and plight are shown on an **individual level** rather than in anonymous statistics. Besides **physical harm**, the **psychological challenge of being "the other"** is tremendous.

"Loose Change"

- Laylor and her brother are confronted with **displacement, poverty and homelessness**.

> **Example**
> "Now all the money they had could be lifted in the palm of a hand to a stranger in a toilet. So they were sleeping rough – in the shelter of a square, covered in blankets, on top of some cardboard."

- These circumstances are particularly harsh when considering the **sudden change** in the teenagers' circumstances.

> **Example**
> "'Last week …' she began, her voice quivering, 'I was in home.' […] 'This day, Friday,' she went on, 'I cooked fish for my mother and brother.' The whites of her eyes were becoming soft and pink; she was going to cry. 'This day Friday I am here in London,' she said. 'And I worry I will not see my mother again.'"

"The Soldier's Tale"

- Salim's story is a **nightmarish odyssey** which leads from being forcibly conscripted by the army, being imprisoned underground and working as a slave to the risky Mediterranean passage to Europe.
- Although Salim seems lucky to have survived, his arrival in Europe is also **marked by abject poverty**.

> **Example**
> "He has no money, no home, no job, no benefits, no Italian, nothing. For nine months, he sleeps on the streets, eats from garbage bins, sifts through rubbish heaps for clothes, a stray dog among humans. He is sick, frequently."

- Shockingly, after getting through all these terrible hardships, it is the **hopelessness and senselessness of waiting** that is finally almost killing Salim.

Example

"He is still suspended in this purgatory, waiting and hoping and dreading. One could diminish a man to nothing, to chaff, to dust, with this; the only weapon you need is time."

"Exterior Paint"

- Alfonse has to endure the **degrading and discriminatory** practice of **segregation**.
- Apart from that, he is also in fear of the very real and **dramatic consequences** of his relationship with Lillian, which makes his insecurity and apparent lack of commitment understandable.

Example

"Alfonse knows what happens in America, black men are beaten with clubs, burned alive, hung from trees and for a lot less than sex with a white woman. This wasn't the time to let the tilt for Lillian topple him headlong into his coffin."

"The Embassy of Cambodia"

- Fatou experiences the injustice of **modern slavery** on a daily basis (not being paid by the Derawals and having her passport withheld).
- However, she does not even consider herself a modern slave, which underlines the **different perceptions of suffering** she discusses in a conversation with Andrew: plight and hardship are a completely normal part of some people's lives while others have extreme reactions even to "smaller" tragedies hitting their lives.

Example

"A tap runs fast the first time it is switched on." (Andrew's reaction when Fatou tells him about people reacting differently to the children's death in Ghana than to the cyclist's death in Italy)

- As a **female migrant**, Fatou is **particularly vulnerable:** not only is she raped by a Russian tourist at the hotel in Accra, but after being fired by the Derawals she faces the new risk of being completely dependent on Andrew.

"The Thing around Your Neck"

- Akunna is also exposed to **sexual assault**. Her "uncle" takes advantage of her vulnerable position and presents sexual exploitation as the normal price she has to pay for being in the United States.

Example

"After you pushed him away, he sat on your bed – it was his house, after all – and smiled and said you were no longer a child at twenty-two. If you let him, he would do many things for you. Smart women did it all the time. How did you think those women back home in Lagos with well-paying jobs made it? Even women in New York City? […] America was give-and-take."

- It is no wonder then that Akunna, like Fatou, perceives her life as being something that is **not under her control**.

Example

"You did not know that people could simply choose not to go to school, that people could dictate to life. You were used to accepting what life gave, writing down what life dictated."

3.2 Seeking one's fortune: Economic and social migration

Aside from seeking refuge, **economic reasons** are the most common motive for migration. In the USA, this motive often coalesces with the notion of the **American Dream** (see "Glossary of important terms").

"The Third and Final Continent"

- The short story is an example of **successful economic migration.**
- As a student in the UK, the narrator's living conditions are **modest**.

Example

"We lived three or four to a room, shared a single, icy toilet, and took turns cooking pots of egg curry, which we ate with our hands on a table covered with newspapers."

- His stamina is rewarded when he is offered a job in the USA, although at first his living conditions there are hardly better than before.
- In the end, however, he is **proud** of having made it in the US.

Example

"Mala and I live in a town about twenty miles from Boston, on a tree-lined street much like Mrs. Croft's, in a house we own"

"Exterior Paint"

- Alfonse comes to the UK in search of economic advancement. He **plans to go back** to the Caribbean as soon as he has found it.
- In the end, however, he spends the rest of his life in the UK, in a stable marriage and apparently quite **well-off**.

> Example
>
> "Been here for a while have you?' Alfonse moves aside so the estate agent can be first in the kitchen […] 'Since sixty-four,' he says. 'I used to rent it, then I bought it. My wife's idea.' 'Good, good. You'll see a handsome return on your investment then Mr. Maynard,' says Baxter"

"The Thing around Your Neck"

- Akunna is perceived as **the lucky one** in her family, as she wins the Green Card Lottery. Everyone (herself included) expects her to make the **American Dream** come true.

> Example
>
> "Right after you won the American visa lottery, they told you: In a month, you will have a big car. Soon, a big house. […] They trooped into the room in Lagos where you lived with your father and mother and three siblings, […], to say goodbye in loud voices and tell you with lowered voices what they wanted you to send them. In comparison to the big car and house […], the things they wanted were minor – handbags and shoes and perfumes and clothes. You said okay, no problem."

- However, Akunna is soon forced to realise that the American Dream **does not become reality so easily**, which is why she is ashamed and breaks off all contact to her family.

> Example
>
> "It wasn't just to your parents you wanted to write, it was also to your friends, and cousins and aunts and uncles. But you could never afford enough perfumes and clothes and handbags and shoes to go around and still pay your rent on what you earned at the waitressing job, so you wrote nobody."

"Green"

- The girl's parents have **prestigious jobs** and are finally getting the official documents for their legal resident status in the USA.
- As they were probably educated in Nigeria, theirs can be called **skilled migration**. This is often seen critically because of the **"brain drain"** in the countries of origin.

3.3 How societies cope with immigration

From the perspective of the host societies, there are coping strategies and procedures on both a formal level (**immigration policies**) and an individual level (**people's reactions to immigrants**).

"Loose Change"

- The first-person narrator exemplifies a reaction to asylum seekers that is quite common among ordinary people in that Laylor's situation **is too much for her** and she does not know how to deal with it.
- She feels **indignant** and does not want to be burdened with the girl's problems. She would prefer to continue **turning a blind eye**.

> Example
>
> "I didn't know anything about people in her situation. Didn't they have to go somewhere? Croydon, was it? Couldn't she have gone to the police? Or some charity? My life was hard enough without this stranger tramping through it."

"The Soldier's Tale"

- Salim's story shows how **cruel** many of the asylum processes in the EU are **on a psychological level**.
- In Italy, he is released into "freedom" after 15 months in a refugee camp, but is completely **unable to fend for himself**.
- In the UK, Salim has to go through another drawn-out asylum decision process (see background information on **"indefinite detention"** as well), being relocated from Dover to Glasgow, never knowing whether he will be granted asylum or forcibly deported back to Italy.
- So, the short story is also a **criticism of European asylum law** and its lack of collaborative, consistent, tenable and speedy procedures.

"The Third and Final Continent"

- The narrator and his wife come to the USA on the **Green Card programme** (see "Green" and "The Thing around Your Neck" as well).
- It seems to be up to them **to acculturate** rather than society openly welcoming them.
- Yet they are also **free to practise their Bengali customs**.

"Exterior Paint"

- Alfonse probably came to Britain in the wake of the **British Nationality Act of 1948**, which gave people from the colonies the right to live and work in the UK.
- Although their manpower was needed in order to fill labour shortages, they were not widely accepted, as both the **colour bar** in some pubs and the **street activism of racist groups** show.

> **Example**
> "Marshall Street itself is in the papers for being too full of black people. 'You don't want a nigger for a neighbour' is the headline"

"The Embassy of Cambodia"

- Similar ideas to those expressed in "Loose Change" are also uttered by the "**we" narrator** in "The Embassy of Cambodia".
- People are aware of the immigrants and even observe them and imagine their hardships. However, they do nothing to help them and would rather **limit their own attention** than get involved.

> **Example**
> "The fact is if we followed the history of every little country in this world […] – we would have no space left in which to live our own lives or to apply ourselves to our necessary tasks, never mind indulge in occasional pleasures"

"The Thing around Your Neck"

- **Juan**, Akunna's employer in Connecticut, is a typical example of someone **taking advantage** of her desperate situation even though he has been in a similar situation himself.
- While he does not treat her badly, he pays her less than the other waitresses – in **tax-free money**.

"The Southside Raza Image Federation Corps of Discovery"

- It is shown how the Californian Border Patrol **hunt and deport illegal immigrants**.
- Shadow's case is particularly tragic because President Obama introduced **DACA** (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) in 2012, which meant that individuals who were brought to the US illegally as children would receive the chance to attain a work permit in the US.

3.4 Preconceptions shape the cross-cultural experience

Preconceptions refer to **prejudices** people may hold about others.

"Loose Change"

- The fact that the narrator's **impression of Laylor changes** as soon as she learns that she and her brother are refugees (and not Spanish tourists) shows that she is prejudiced against immigrants.
- Her prejudices play a big role in her **justifying to herself** why she does not want Laylor to come home with her.
- She repeats common preconceptions, for instance, like the idea of calculating immigrants intent on tricking her.

> **Example**
> "She had sought me out – sifted me from the crowd. This young woman was desperate for help. She'd even cunningly made me obliged to her."

- The narrator's preconceptions are certainly shaped by her **grandmother's experiences:** from being an immigrant who needed the help of her "Good Samaritan" herself, she turned into someone who is prejudiced against foreigners.

> **Example**
> "Now my grandmother talks with passion about scrounging refugees; those asylum seekers who can't even speak the language, storming the country and making it difficult for her and everyone else."

"Exterior Paint"

- Lillian and her mother represent **two extremes** on the spectrum of reactions to foreigners.
- While **Lillian** is very open-minded, even curious, about the newly arrived Black men in their street, **her mother** is completely hostile to them, wanting to have as little contact as possible with the Caribbean men.

"The Embassy of Cambodia"

- Even though the Derawals and other people from Fatou's Willesden neighbourhood come from a **migration background** themselves, they are **still prejudiced against African immigrants,** each group of immigrants apparently preferring to keep to their own kind.

- The Derawals do not treat Fatou as an individual human being with needs and dreams but simply as a **servant** and maybe even as a slave (hitting her, talking to her disrespectfully, using her name as a term of abuse, etc.).
- What is even worse is their **hypocrisy** in not wanting to admit to their condescending treatment of her, such as when Mrs. Derawal denies having taken Fatou's passport.
- On a larger scale, the building of the **Embassy of Cambodia** and the associations it conjures up also show people's preconceptions: when they are confronted with a foreign country, it is usually **bad news**, such as the genocide in Cambodia, that **sticks in people's minds** and not a positive curiosity about the unknown.

"The Thing around Your Neck"

- **Prejudices from both sides** play a role in Akunna's inability to put down roots in the USA.
- She and her family have **false expectations** of the American Dream being easily attainable for everyone in the USA.
- Ironically, the fears of Akunna's family about the violence prevalent in the USA ("don't buy a gun like those Americans") are **mirrored** by the Americans' preconceptions of Africans as being wild and savage.

Example

> "the neighbors said, a few months after he moved into his house, that the squirrels had started to disappear. They had heard that Africans ate all kinds of wild animals."

- Other prejudices Akunna faces are that all Africans are **poor, uneducated** and living **rural** lives ("a mixture of ignorance and arrogance", as Akunna's "uncle" puts it).

Example

> "They asked where you learned to speak English and if you had real houses back in Africa and if you'd seen a car before you came to America."

- Even with her boyfriend, Akunna never overcomes the stage in which she sees him as a **stereotypical** privileged White American (and he probably sees her as "an exotic trophy, an ivory tusk").

3.5 Migration challenges one's sense of self

For the migrants themselves, moving to a new country is of course a life-changing experience which has a profound impact on their **sense of identity**. However, it can also be a challenge for people in the host communities to integrate **cross-cultural encounters** into their lives.

"Loose Change"

- Before meeting Laylor, the narrator sees herself as a **typical Londoner**, i. e. reserved towards strangers, but also as someone who **admires social critics, feminists and activists**.
- She is shaped by being a **third-generation immigrant**, knowing her grandmother's stories of arriving in the UK and being saved by a stranger.
- For some time, she indulges in the idea that she might be the person that saves Laylor in turn.

Example

> "All Laylor's grandchildren would know my name."

- Her encounter with Laylor forces her to acknowledge that it is her own **comfort** that she values most, which is why she cannot be the person she would like to see herself as.
- In an even harsher reading, she is forced to see herself as **"a savage"**, because she cruelly decides to walk out on Laylor.

Example

> "Only a savage would turn away when it was merely kindness that was needed."

- In order not to think too badly of herself, the fact that she is a Londoner, but also other factors, like the son she has to think of, her life being hard enough anyway, etc., serve as **excuses to herself** for why she does not help the girl.

"Exterior Paint"

- Alfonse clearly **develops as a character**, being shaped by his fears at first and later by his true love for a White woman and by an encounter with his role model, Malcolm X.

- When he and Lillian start meeting, he is **cautious** and lets others – Lillian's mother, for example – dictate the terms of their relationship.
- Lillian leaving him and Malcolm X appearing aloof in the face of hatred and discrimination give him the **strength** to claim Lillian's hand and face her mother openly.

"The Thing around Your Neck"

- Akunna's life in the USA, where she is only perceived as a stereotypical African and thereby defined by others, leads to a kind of **detachment from herself**.
- This psychological state, which could even be called **dissociation**, means that she is like an observer of her own life who does not act but only **reacts**.
- Paradoxically, it is through her boyfriend, whom she finally leaves, that she acknowledges her own **feelings of anger** and starts to act.
- Akunna's return to Nigeria could be seen as her **ultimate realisation** of who she is, what she wants and where she belongs.

"Green"

- The nine-year-old protagonist is often in a state of **confusion**.
- She feels the **need to conform** to American culture, which is why her parents' different background sometimes **embarrasses** her.
- Nevertheless, she cannot deny the colour of her skin nor the fact that she loves her parents.
- She is not mature enough and **lacks the confidence** to see her family's cultural background as an enrichment.
- **A feeling of belonging** (to both her family and the country she lives in) is what she dreams of.

"The Southside Raza Image Federation Corps of Discovery"

- Shadow represents the tragic example of someone whose **sense of identity** is **shattered by bureaucratic definitions**.
- He clearly sees himself as American (and forcefully distances himself from Mexicans who have immigrated illegally) but, in legal terms, is not.

3.6 Migration (trans)forms relationships

The short stories examine relationships between migrants but also between migrants and people from host communities.

"Loose Change"

- Although Laylor is no more than 18 herself, she has to **take care** of her younger brother, managing their stay for the night and the little money they have left.
- Laylor's brother acts like a rebellious teenager towards a mother, whereas Laylor has to assume the **role of a responsible parent**, although at other instances she is shown as still rather naive herself.

"The Soldier's Tale"

- Family relationships do not play a big role in Salim's account of his journey, which is probably due to the fact that they do not influence his asylum status. The fact that even decisive events like a marriage or the birth of a child completely disappear in the official account for the Home Office underlines the whole **inhumanity** of the system.
- Salim's loneliness and desperation are only relieved by the help of complete strangers (people from the visitor's group who visit him in detention).

> **Example**
>
> "In a rare aside in the application, Salim notes, 'Without them I would have killed myself. They took me from dark to light.'"

- The **relationship between the narrator** of the short story **and Salim** is both **extraordinary and unequal:** while the narrator has read lots of stories similar to Salim's and has to check them for their accuracy, Salim's story affects the narrator and makes them think about and maybe even question the system they work in.

"The Third and Final Continent"

- At first, the fact that the narrator already lives in the USA while his wife Mala stays in India for six weeks **estranges the couple** from each other. This is not only true during their absence from each other, but also during Mala's first weeks in the USA, when there is a **culture gap** between them.

Example

> "Unlike Mala, I was used to it all by then: used to cornflakes and milk, used to Helen's visits, used to sitting on the bench with Mrs. Croft. The only thing I was not used to was Mala."

- **Mrs. Croft** acts almost like a **bridge** between husband and wife, maybe because she was the one who made the narrator get used to America, but the encounter with her also reminds him of his initial time in a new country and arouses his empathy for Mala.

"Exterior Paint"

- Alfonse's **relationship with Lillian** is what enables him to put down roots in the UK, despite the hostile environment he faces in Birmingham. His planned temporary stay there turns permanent.
- Lillian **has to decide** between her love for Alfonse and her loyalty to her mother. Alfonse's new-found strength enables her to side with him and make him the centre of her new life, probably turning her back on her mother (although the couple even invite her to their wedding).

"The Embassy of Cambodia"

- Fatou would probably not be close friends with Andrew if he were not an African immigrant like herself. Fatou is not sexually attracted to **Andrew**, but he **is her only friend** and, apart from her weekly escape to the swimming pool, going to church and to a café with Andrew are the only occasions Fatou leaves the Derawals' house for her own pleasure. In fact, their meetings are the key reason why Fatou does not see herself as a slave.
- Andrew is Fatou's **lifeline** when she is fired.
- However, the fact that Andrew treats Fatou respectfully should not hide the fact that he is interested in having more than a friendship with her. So Fatou's decision to move in with Andrew and take the job he arranges for her could mean that she leaves one **state of dependence** for another.

"The Thing around Your Neck"

- On the one hand, the relationship between Akunna and her boyfriend **comforts** her in her new, lonely life in a foreign country.

Example

> "You made up and made love [...]. The thing that wrapped itself around your neck, that nearly choked you before you fell asleep, started to loosen, to let go."

- On the other, it is exactly the **culture gaps and misunderstandings** between them that are decisive with regard to her return to Nigeria.

"Green"

- The basic **difference** between the daughter and her parents is that the girl was probably born in the US and is therefore an American citizen, while her parents are not. Indirectly, the parents tend to underline that difference by expressing **pride and gladness** at their daughter's American citizenship.

Examples

> "'No, she's the American in the family,' Mom says and smiles."
>
> "Mom says, 'The American has spoken. Back to Mississippi for us.'"

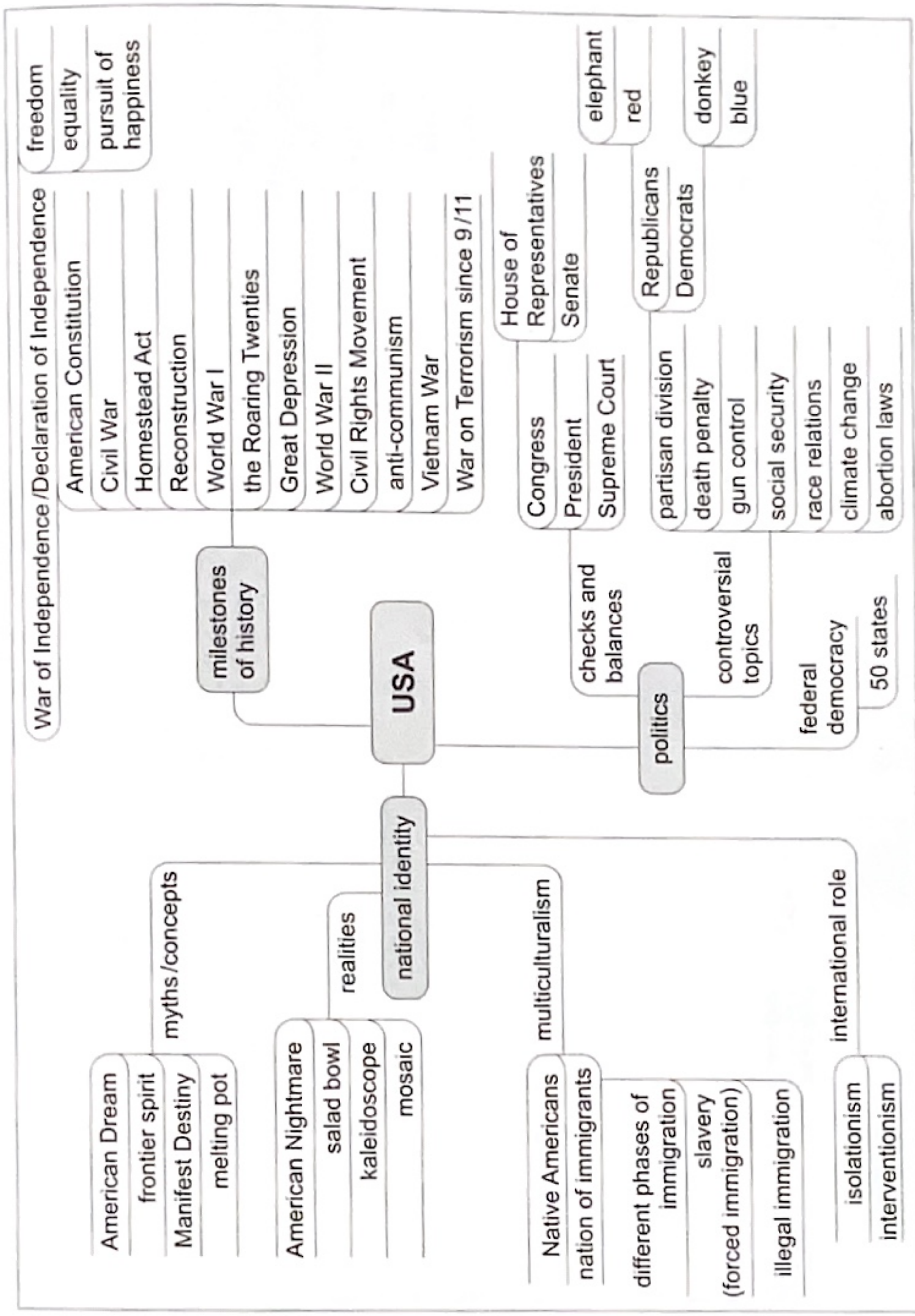
- Instead of them stressing her Americanness, it might be easier for the daughter if her parents helped her understand the family's **multicultural identity**, because her Nigerian background seems confusing rather than enriching to the girl. Ideally, a **feeling of belonging** to her family's roots and to her country should no longer be mutually exclusive.

"The Southside Raza Image Federation Corps of Discovery"

- Sharing one cultural background and common interests, Shadow and Junior are **close friends**.
- Their friendship is **terminated by outside forces**, namely the Border Patrol and US immigration laws.
- Although they lose contact, Shadow's deportation has a profound effect on Junior, who seems to shy away from everything that reminds him of his friend's fate and probably his **feelings of guilt** (book about Lewis and Clark, place where they were canoeing).

Anglo-American culture and our modern world

1 USA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Civil War
Homestead Act
Reconstruction
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World War II
Civil Rights Movement
anti-communism
Vietnam War
War on Terrorism since 9/11
politics
checks and balances
Congress
House of Representatives
Senate
President
Supreme Court
controversial topics
partisan division
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Democrats
donkey
blue
death penalty
gun control
social security
race relations
climate change
abortion laws
federal democracy
50 states
national identity
myths/concepts
American Dream
frontier spirit
Manifest Destiny
melting pot
realities
American Nightmare
salad bowl
kaleidoscope
mosaic
multiculturalism
Native Americans
nation of immigrants
different phases of immigration
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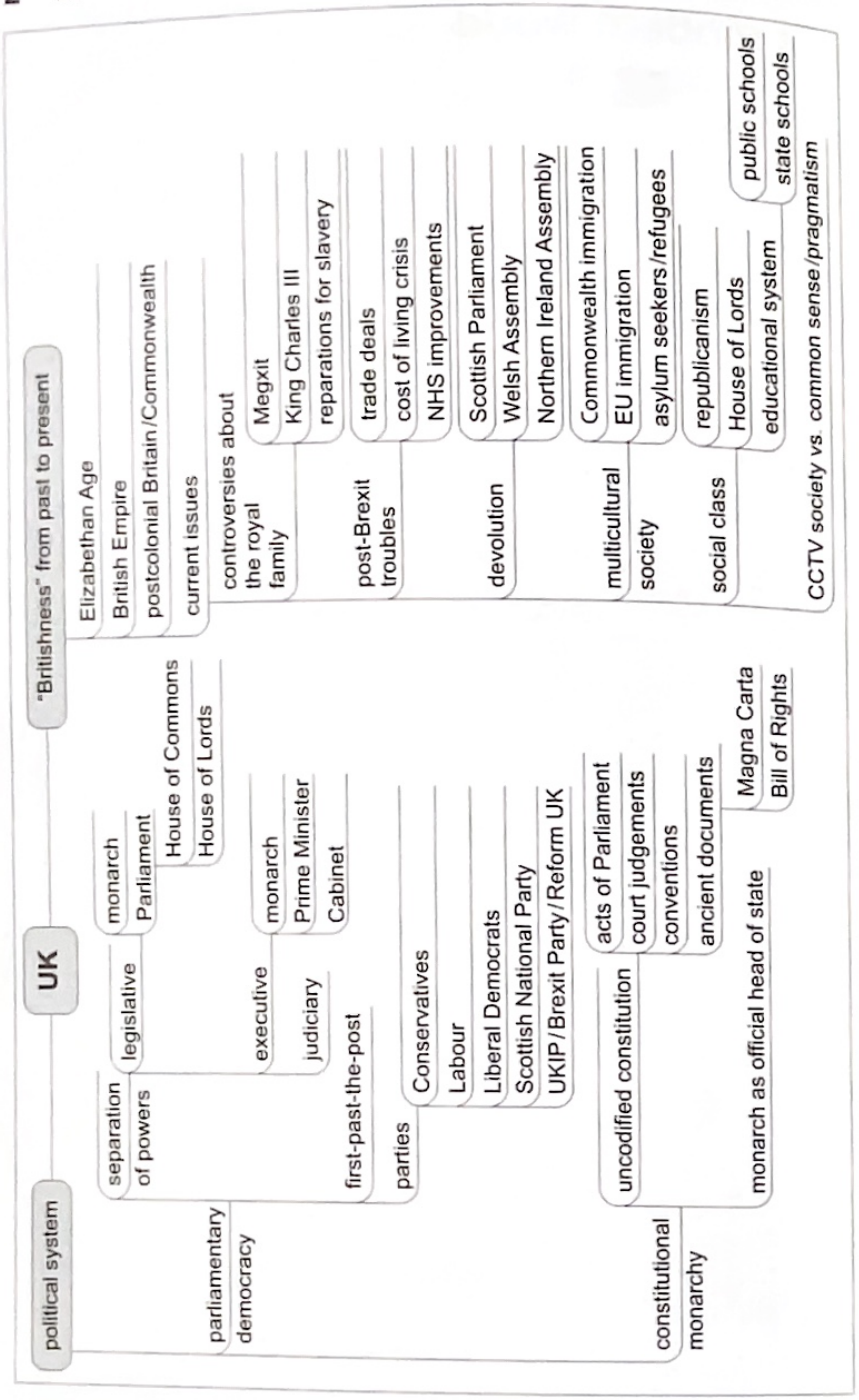
international role
isolationism
interventionism

2 UK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Conservatives
Labour
Liberal Democrats
Scottish National Party
UKIP/Brexit Party/Reform UK
constitutional monarchy
uncodified constitution
acts of Parliament
court judgements
conventions
ancient documents
Magna Carta
Bill of Rights
monarch as official head of state
"Britishness" from past to present
Elizabethan Age
British Empire
postcolonial Britain/Commonwealth
current issues
controversies about the royal family
Megxit
King Charles III
reparations for slavery
post-Brexit troubles
trade deals
cost of living crisis
NHS improvements
devolution
Scottish Parliament
Welsh Assembly
Northern Ireland Assembly
multicultural society
Commonwealth immigration
EU immigration
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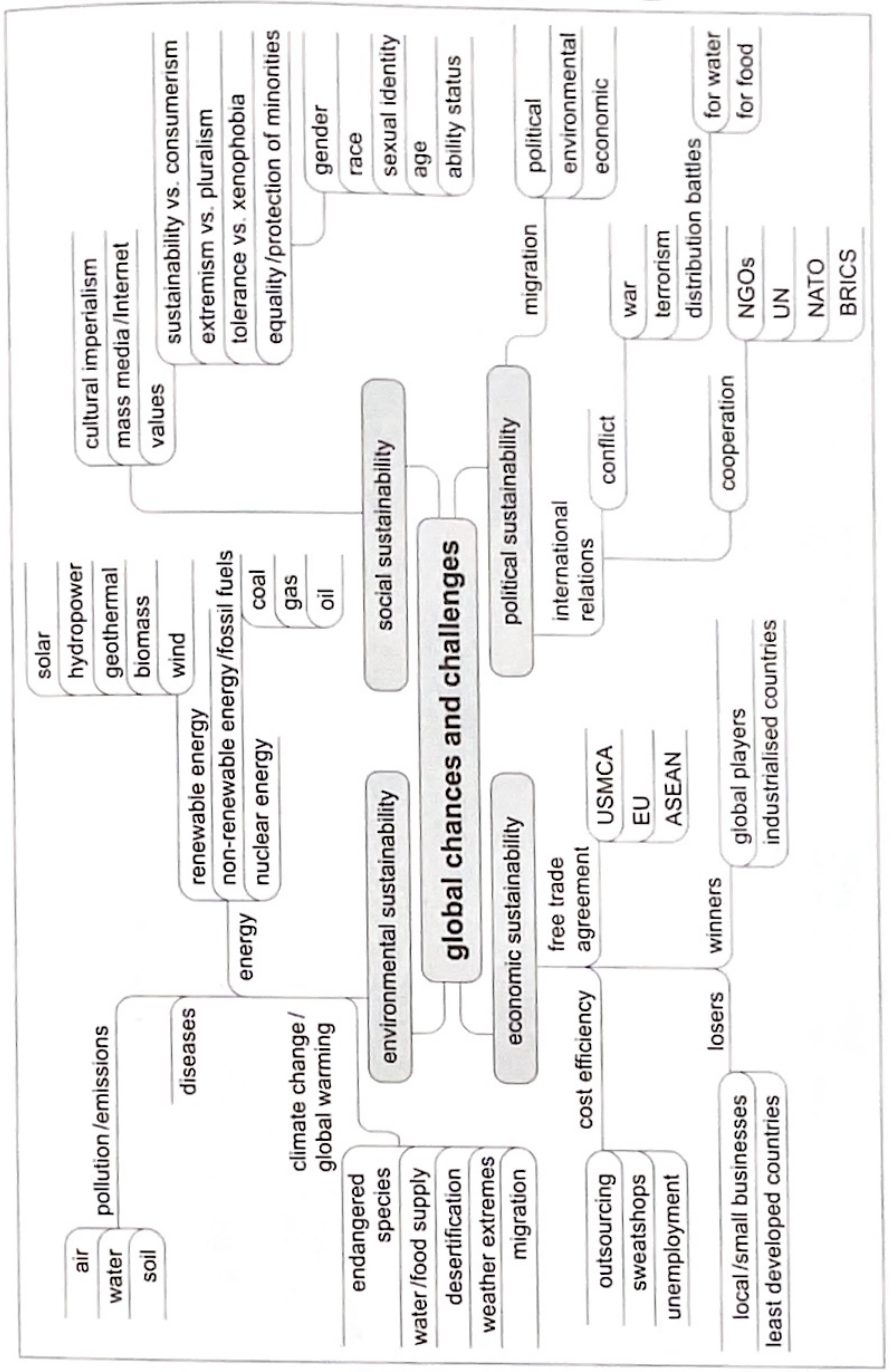
social class
republicanism
House of Lords
educational system
public schools
state schools
CCTV society *vs. common sense/pragmatism*

3 Global chances and challenges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renewable energy
solar
hydropower
geothermal
biomass
wind
non-renewable energy/fossil fuels
coal
gas
oil
nuclear energy
economic sustainability
cost efficiency
outsourcing
sweatshops
unemployment
free trade agreement
USMCA
EU
ASEAN
winners
global players
industrialised countries
losers
local/small businesses
least developed countries
social sustainability
cultural imperialism
mass media/Internet
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sustainability vs. consumerism
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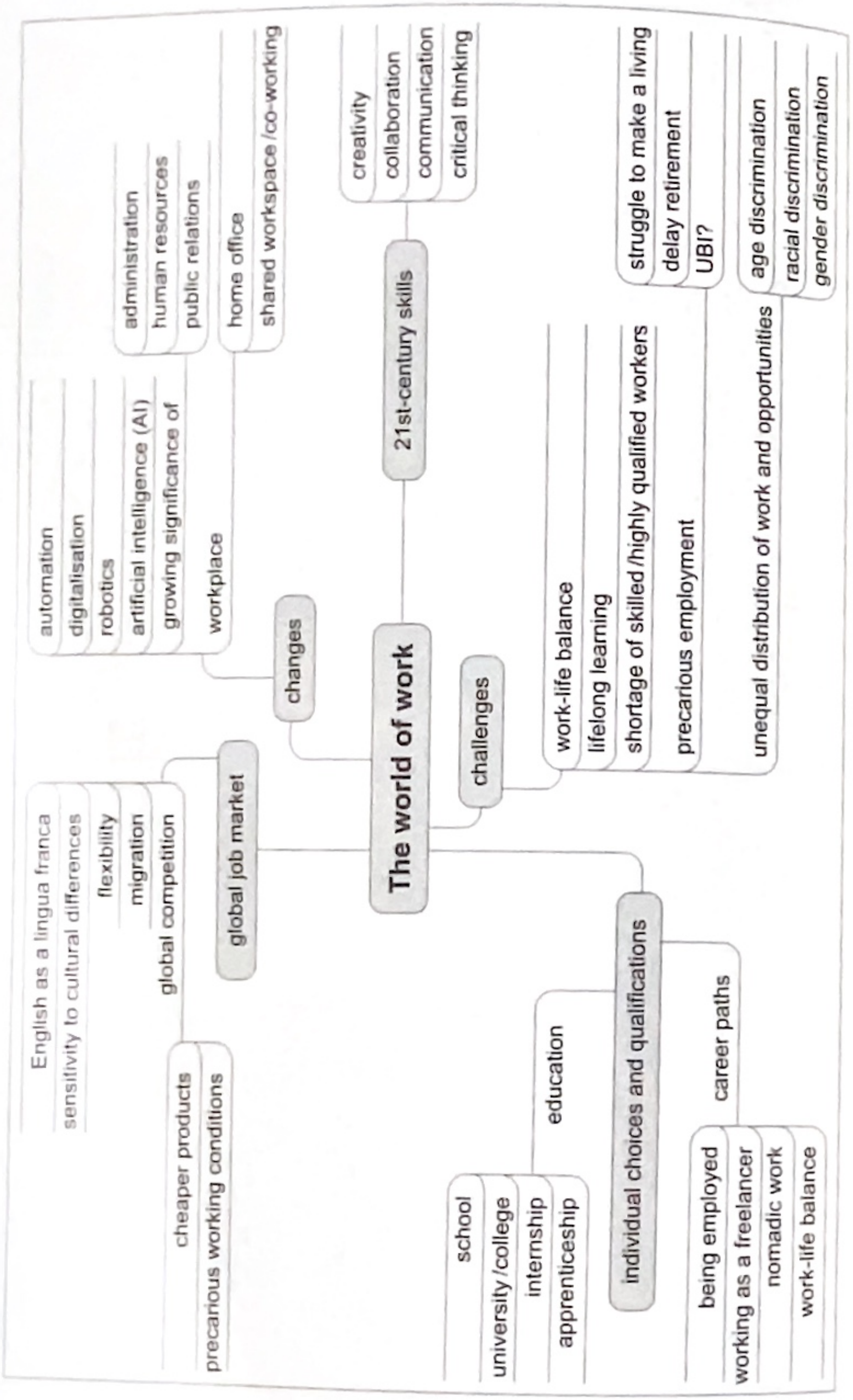
4 The world of work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public relations
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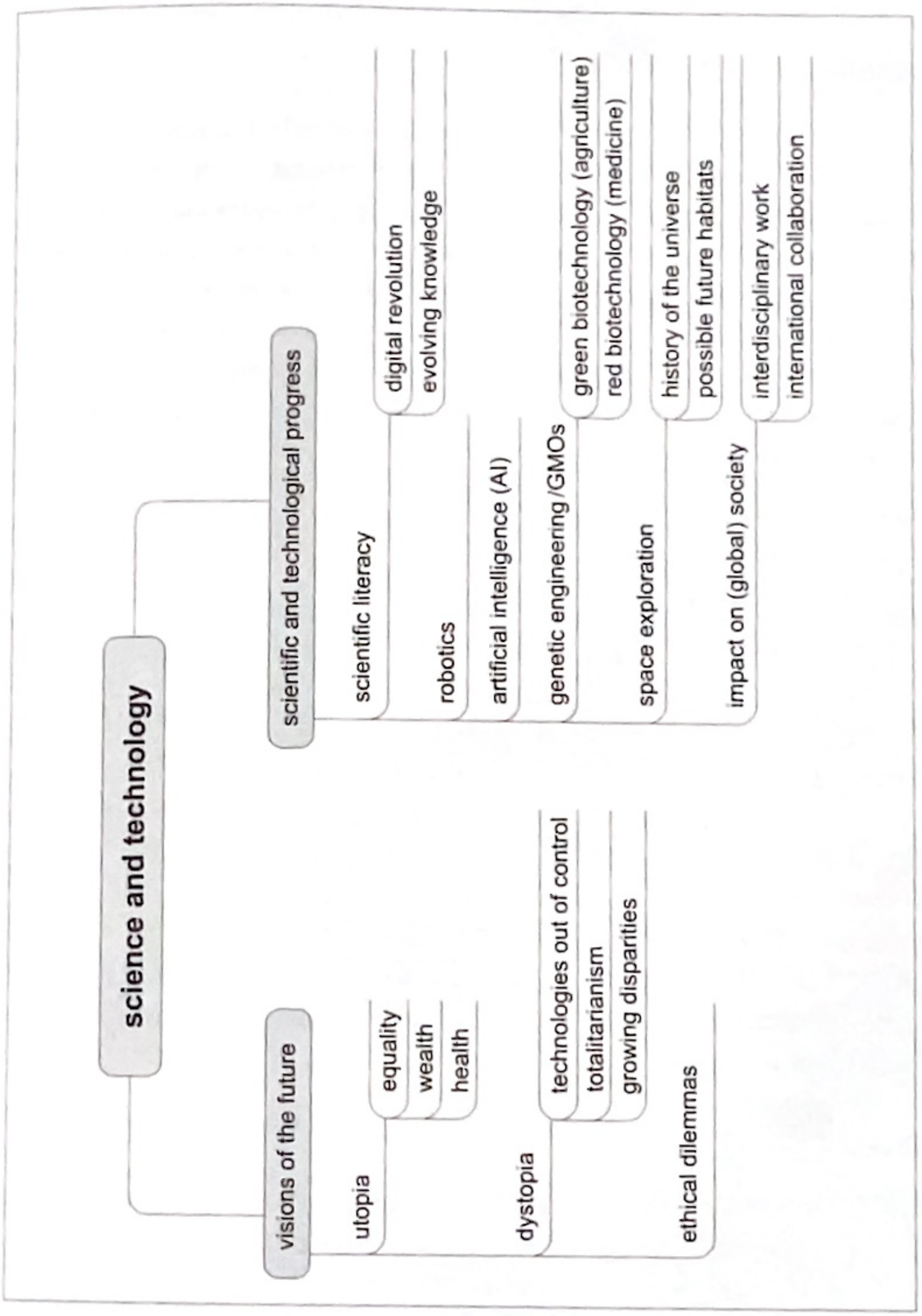
home office
shared workspace/co-working
21st-century skills
creativity
collaboration
communication
critical thinking
challenges
work-life balance
lifelong learning
shortage of skilled/highly qualified workers
precarious employment
struggle to make a living
delay retirement
UBI?
unequal distribution of work and opportunities
age discrimination
racial discrimination
gender discrimination
global job market
English as a lingua franca
sensitivity to cultural differences
flexibility
migration
global competition
cheaper products
precarious working conditions
individual choices and qualifications
education
school
university/college
internship
apprenticeship
career paths
being employed
working as a freelancer
nomadic work
work-life balance

5 Science and technology


science and technology
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digital revolution
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genetic engineering/GMOs
green biotechnology (agriculture)
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space exploration
history of the universe
possible future habitats
impact on (global) society
interdisciplinary work
international collaboration
visions of the future
utopia
equality
wealth
health
dystopia
technologies out of control
totalitarianism
growing disparities
ethical dilemmas

6 Glossary of important terms

2nd amendment

The 2nd amendment to the ⇒ American Constitution was ratified as part of the **Bill of Rights** (the first ten amendments to the Constitution) on 15 December 1791. The Bill of Rights comprises laws concerned with **personal freedoms** and rights and was a reaction to people **fearing too much power of the federal government**. The 2nd amendment reads, "A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, **the right of the people to keep and bear arms** shall not be infringed." For years, the question of whether the amendment was to be understood as an individual right of **gun possession** has been controversially discussed. This position was confirmed in a Supreme Court decision of 2008. Advocates of **stricter gun control** cite mass shootings as well as alarming numbers of gun-related deaths (according to statistics, there are more gun-related deaths in the USA on a day than in the UK in a year) as evidence of the dangers of individual gun possession. Accidents spur even more **safety concerns**. Furthermore, widespread gun ownership propagates a **culture of violence**, according to gun law proponents. Opponents of stricter gun control, however, see individual gun ownership as a sign of **personal freedom** and **democratisation**. According to them, individual gun ownership is essential for **self-defence** or successful **resistance to oppression**. The famous mantra of the **NRA**, the National Rifle Association, "The only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun", summarises the non-profit organisation's position in favour of individual gun ownership.

9/11

On 11 September 2001, the **single deadliest terrorist attack** in recent history occurred when terrorists hijacked four planes and crashed two of them into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in Manhattan, one into the Pentagon in Arlington County in Virginia and one, which was actually intended to crash in Washington, D.C., in a field in Pennsylvania. Almost 3,000 people were killed in the attack and more than 6,000 injured. The radical Islamist group **al-Qaeda** and their leader Osama bin Laden were behind the hijackings, which were seen as an attack on western culture and the United States of America's standing in the world. As a direct consequence of the 9/11 attacks, President George W. Bush declared the ⇒ **War on Terrorism**. Heightened security measures as well as new **anti-terrorism legislation** followed throughout the western world and the competences of **security services** and **law enforcement agencies** were expanded. Furthermore, **anti-Muslim feelings** surged in many countries despite most Muslim communities strictly condemning the attacks.

abortion laws

For those who support the legality of abortion, the right to terminate an unwanted pregnancy is a **basic human right** for women (⇒ **gender (in)equality**) because it gives them **control over their own bodies**. The term **"pro-choice"** is used to describe this standpoint. In contrast, those against abortion often call theirs a **"pro-life"** attitude. For them, human life begins from the time of conception, so abortion is seen as a kind of murder. There are various nuances to abortion laws throughout the world, which range from an outright ban to certain conditions having to be met to abortion being a more or less completely free choice. In the USA, a Supreme Court decision in the **Roe vs Wade** case legalised abortion throughout the country in **1973**. In **2022**, however, this decision was overturned, which led to some of the US states passing **more restrictive abortion laws**. In the UK, abortion has been legal since 1967 (with the exception of Northern Ireland, where it only became legal in 2019).

AI (artificial intelligence)

In a broader sense, artificial intelligence refers to all intelligence that is demonstrated by a machine in contrast to natural intelligence, which is demonstrated by humans or animals. Intelligent actions usually involve some kind of perception of the environment as well as **learning and problem-solving functions** in order to achieve certain goals more easily. Some applications of artificial intelligence include autonomous vehicles, search engines and targeting online advertisements, for example. Applications in medicine or warfare as well as the more recent developments of **generative AI**, i.e. programmes that can copy creative processes and create new texts, pictures, etc., though celebrated for their potential in relieving humans of many tasks and even outperforming them in efficiency and precision, have also raised **ethical questions** and critical warnings of potential dangers. These range from mass unemployment to humans becoming ever more dependent on machines and even to nightmare scenarios where AI spirals completely out of human control. Another point that is often made in connection with AI is the **uniqueness of humanity**, which is devalued when the brain is seen as nothing more than a computer that can be artificially reproduced and programmed to function in a certain way.

American Constitution

The American Constitution is regarded as the oldest written and codified constitution which is still in force as the country's supreme law. Since its introduction in 1789, it has been amended 27 times. The original constitution delineates the form of government with its **separation of powers** into the executive, legislative and judiciary branches as well as the concept of ⇒ **federalism**.

American Dream

The American Dream can be seen as a concept of self-definition for the country. It promotes the **ideal** that everyone can be successful in America if they work hard enough and that the country offers **equal opportunities** and **social mobility** to everyone. James Truslow Adams defined the American Dream in 1931 as "[the] dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement". While many descriptions of the Dream, like **"From dishwasher to millionaire"** or **"From rags to riches"**, emphasise the **economic wealth** achievable in the US, the Dream is also closely connected to values and ideals like **freedom** and **democracy**. Having its roots in the **Declaration of Independence's** famous sentence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness", it has served as a pull factor for millions of ⇒ **immigrants** who came to the "land of the free" and the "country of unlimited opportunities" in search of a better life in political and economic respects. In recent years, however, **criticism** that the Dream is no longer alive is growing louder. On the one hand, surveys reveal that the proclaimed social mobility does not exist in reality, that the US is instead one of the least socially mobile countries of the developed world. On the other hand, tendencies like racism, intolerance or scepticism against foreigners are growing, challenging the concept of a country that welcomes everyone with open arms (⇒ **American Nightmare**).

American Nightmare

This term has been coined in response to the widespread celebration and glorification of the ⇒ **American Dream**. It describes the myth behind the American Dream, i.e. the widespread **impossibility of fulfilling it** and the negative feelings associated with this failure. Growing **racism, discrimination and poverty** as well as highly criticised political developments, such as the ⇒ Vietnam War, are often seen as expressions of the American Nightmare.

anti-communism

Anti-communism can be broadly defined as an ideological position opposed to communism. In the USA, anti-communist tendencies were especially strong during the so-called **Cold War era** (from the end of World War II until the early 1990s). After the Second World War alliance had broken up, the **USA** and the **Soviet Union** faced each other as rivals for becoming the world's most influential **superpower**. Their opposing economic and political systems, **communism** in the Soviet Union and **democratic capitalism** in the USA, served as justification for the USA to campaign a **policy of containment** and to back foreign anti-communists in their war efforts, most notably in **Korea**, ⇒ **Vietnam** or the **Gulf region**. The establishment of the **North Atlantic Treaty Organisation** (⇒ **NATO**) as an anti-communist military alliance in 1949 as well as the (**nuclear**) **arms race** between the two countries can also be seen in this context. In domestic politics, the late

1940s as well as the 1950s are known as the **McCarthy** era, a time of anti-communist hysteria which led to mass investigations against real or alleged communists. After the breakdown of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, anti-communist tendencies became muted. However, the political stance against Russia, Cuba and North Korea as well as still existent ideological restrictions on naturalisation provide evidence that the so-called "**Red Scare**" has not entirely become a thing of the past.

ASEAN

ASEAN is short for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, an **intergovernmental organisation** with ten member states (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia). The association seeks to facilitate alliances and cooperation in different fields like economy, politics, military matters, etc.

Bill of Rights (UK)

The Bill of Rights was passed in 1689 and is one of the most important historical documents making up the ⇒ **uncodified British constitution**. In it, certain civil rights are defined and the monarch's power is limited in favour of Parliament. After the **English Civil War** in the mid-17th century and the following **Restoration period**, which resulted in the autocratic rule of a Catholic monarch (James II), the aspirations of the **Glorious Revolution**, which established the Protestants William of Orange and his wife Mary on the throne, were written down in the Bill of Rights.

Brexit

Brexit is short for "British exit from the European Union". In a national **referendum**, instigated by then Prime Minister David Cameron and carried out on 23 June 2016, **52 %** of the British electorate voted for leaving the ⇒ European Union. The main reasons for the Brexiteers' success seemed to be that the "**Leave**" campaign addressed issues of great importance in popular perception like **national sovereignty** or ⇒ **immigration control**, whereas the "**Remain**" campaign mainly focused on potential **economic hardships** resulting from a break, which many voters were not overtly concerned with. The date for the final withdrawal from the Union was set for 29 March 2019. However, after the referendum, a time of political insecurities and unrest followed. David Cameron resigned, **Theresa May** became prime minister and faced the challenging task of executing Brexit. Finally, the UK's official withdrawal from the EU took place on 31 January 2020 under Prime Minister **Boris Johnson**. Since January 2021, relations between the UK and the EU have been fixed in the **EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement**. Still, a lot of issues remain unsolved. Economic problems, such as a shortness of supplies, have predominantly impacted the UK. Another pressing political problem is the situation in Ireland: To avoid a "hard border" between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland needs to stay in the EU customs union and the "hard" border accordingly runs between the Irish island and Great Britain. Opponents of this latter solution fear a split between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK as a result.

BRICS

BRICS is an intergovernmental organisation which was originally founded between **Brazil**, **Russia**, **India** and **China** as BRIC in 2001 and was expanded by the entry of **South Africa** in 2010. Its aims include economic cooperation and, increasingly, geopolitical coordination of local initiatives as well. BRICS is often seen as a force to **challenge the G7**, who represent the (formerly) most influential western economies. Due to several expansions, when more countries of the "Global South" have been admitted, the organisation is now sometimes referred to as **BRICS plus**.

British Empire

In the 15th and 16th centuries, Portugal and Spain were the first nations to explore the globe and establish overseas colonies. As a consequence, Britain, France and the Netherlands saw their own status challenged and started colonising mainly American and Asian territories. After **colonial wars** and especially after the subjugation of the **Indian**

subcontinent in the middle of the 18th century and the victory over France in the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, **Britain** emerged as the **principal naval and imperial power**. American Independence in 1783 meant that the British overseas interests focused on Asia, Africa and the Pacific instead. During its peak time, Queen Victoria's reign, the British Empire covered **almost one fourth of the world's land area** and ruled over **more than 400 million people** (23 % of the world population of the time). The British Empire was described as "the empire on which the sun never sets", due to its large geographical extension. In the course of the **20th century**, however, Britain lost almost all of its former colonies, due to a mixture of partly violent independence movements in the colonised territories and British decisions to voluntarily grant **independence** to them. The handing over of Hong Kong to China in 1997 is often seen as the official end of the British Empire. Many of Britain's former colonies are now members of the ⇒ **Commonwealth of Nations**. Furthermore, the legacy of the British Empire lives on in many of its former subject states' political, legal and cultural organisation as well as in the fact that English is a global language with more than 370 million native speakers worldwide.

Britishness

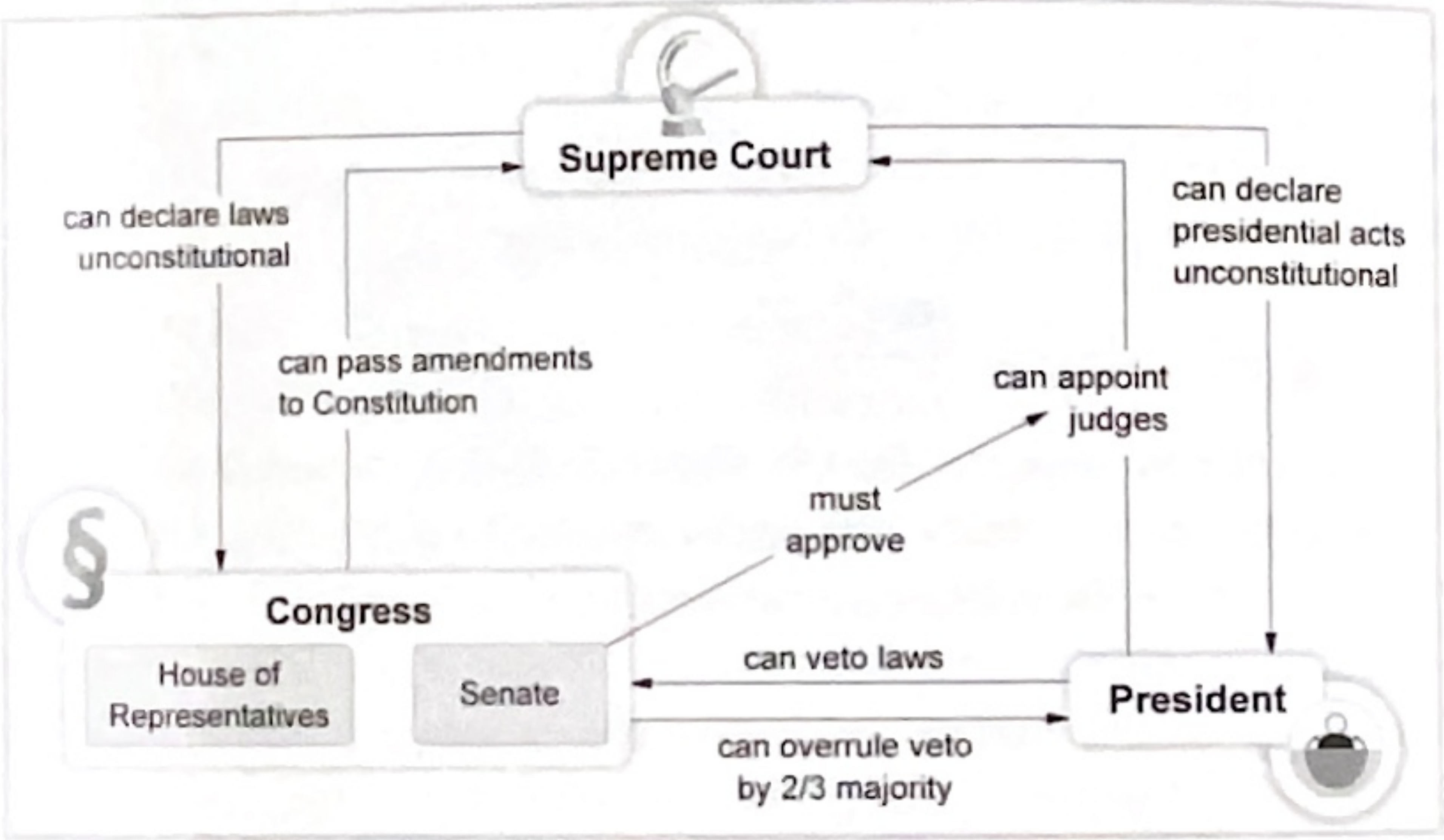
Generally, Britishness is the state or quality of being British or showing typically British characteristics. According to popular belief (or clichés), attitudes like fairness, moderation and reserve, politeness, common sense and a distinctive sense of humour are typically British. The governmental position names values like democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance towards others as typically British. However, especially since the late 20th century, the term has often been **controversial** because it is exploited to create a feeling of unity and belonging to the British nation, generating insiders and outsiders in the process. As Britishness is often seen as synonymous with Englishness, both the Scottish and Welsh as well as ethnic minorities might feel **discriminated against**. For instance, the "Life in the UK" test, which is supposed to measure the Britishness of aspiring new citizens, is a constant source of criticism.

CCTV

CCTV is short for **closed-circuit television** and is often used synonymously with **video surveillance**. In recent years, CCTV/video surveillance has become a controversial topic. On the one hand, in the light of terrorist attacks or other **security concerns**, there is a rising demand for surveillance whereas on the other, people feel that the increase of video cameras monitoring their behaviour in public places is compromising their **privacy rights**. Governments argue that there are legal frameworks in place to avoid misuse of data and claim that the feelings of being unduly monitored are exaggerated. However, protests against body cameras for police staff or comparisons to a "Big Brother" society (in allusion to George Orwell's novel *1984*) show that these claims are far from being undisputed.

checks and balances

A system of checks and balances is envisaged by many constitutions in order to avoid tyranny. It means that political power is **separated** and each of the usually **three branches of government** has means to control the others. A typical example is that of the US government consisting of the **executive (President)**, **legislative (Congress)** and **judiciary (Supreme Court):** The president forms the executive together with the **Cabinet**, who head the state departments, these departments and other executive agencies. The president's job is to protect the ⇒ American Constitution and enforce the laws made by Congress. The president is both Head of the Executive and Head of State. Additionally, they are commander-in-chief of the USA's armed forces, can veto Congressional laws and appoint judges for the Supreme Court. The president is elected for four years and can serve a maximum of two terms. However, the presidential powers are not unlimited: The **Congress**, which forms the legislative branch and consists of two chambers, the **House of Representatives** and the **Senate**, can overrule a presidential veto and can even start a process called **impeachment** that results in the president's removal from office. Furthermore, the Senate must approve the president's appointments to the Supreme Court. Apart from their controlling functions, the chambers of Congress make the laws of the United States; they can initiate constitutional amendments and control the federal budget. In the House of Representatives, members from all states are elected for two years and the number of members varies according to a state's population, whereas senators serve for six years and each state no matter its size sends two senators to the Senate. The senators are not all elected at one point, but every two years, one third of the senators is newly elected. The Supreme Court can declare laws unconstitutional. Currently, the Supreme Court consists of nine judges who serve for a lifetime and can only be impeached or resign voluntarily.


Supreme Court
can declare laws unconstitutional
can declare presidential acts unconstitutional
can pass amendments to Constitution
can appoint judges
must approve
Congress
House of Representatives
Senate
can veto laws
can overrule veto by 2/3 majority
President

Civil Rights Movement

The name Civil Rights Movement mainly refers to the campaigns and direct actions fighting for **equal rights for African Americans** in the 1950s and 1960s. The origins of the Civil Rights Movement date back to the **American ⇒ Civil War** (1861–1865) in the aftermath of which **slavery** was abolished (**13th Amendment**, 1865) and African Americans were granted full citizenship rights (**14th Amendment**, 1868). While this made them theoretically equal to their White fellow citizens, in the South of the USA, discriminatory practices continued and were even constitutionalised in the Supreme Court's **Plessy vs. Ferguson** ruling of 1896. This ruling declared "separate, but equal" facilities constitutional, which resulted in **segregation** in buses, restaurants, hotels, schools, theatres, etc. Unofficially, these discriminatory laws were known as "**Jim Crow laws**".

Starting with another Supreme Court ruling, **Brown vs. Board of Education** (1954), which introduced school desegregation, the Civil Rights Movement gained impetus and organised protest actions, for instance the **Montgomery Bus Boycott** initiated by Rosa Parks in 1955, restaurant sit-ins or marches. Famous Civil Rights leaders, like **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**, whose "**I have a dream**" speech after the **March on Washington** in 1963 became world-famous, advocated **non-violent resistance**, while there were also groups, like the **Black Power Movement**, who saw non-violent resistance as not effective enough. The Civil Rights Movement finally proved successful when the **Civil Rights Act** was passed in **1964**, which outlawed any discrimination based on race, colour, religion, sex, or national origin. The **Voting Rights Act** followed in **1965** and secured the African Americans' voting rights.

When **Barack Obama** was elected the USA's first African American president in **2008**, this was hailed as an important victory of the Civil Rights Movement's aims. In the light of still difficult ⇒ **race relations**, continued inequality in areas like work, housing, education, wealth, imprisonment, etc. and renewed protests against unfair police targeting of Black people ("**Black Lives Matter Movement**"), it remains debatable in how far the aims of the Civil Rights Movement have really been achieved yet.

Civil War (1861–1865)

The American Civil War (1861–1865) is still the war in which most Americans were ever killed. The main trigger for the war were economic differences between the **industrialised northern** and the **agricultural southern states**. The self-declared **Confederate States** of America (South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, North Carolina, Missouri and Kentucky) wanted to become an independent nation and fought for the **right of secession** against the **Unionists** of the North who wanted the USA to remain intact. **Slavery** became an important issue in the course of the war when the Unionists (and President Abraham Lincoln) declared the abolition of slavery as one of their goals, whereas the South's plantations were largely reliant on slave labour. Mainly due to their technologically more advanced army, the North won the war and slavery was abolished. In the former Confederate States, the Civil War was followed by the so-called "**Jim Crow laws**", enforcing segregation and continued discrimination of African Americans. Their repercussions can still be felt today in especially difficult ⇒ **race relations** in the South.

climate change

In a broader sense, the term climate change refers to any statistical long-term change in weather patterns. However, it is mainly used to describe climate change effected by **human influence**, which is sometimes also referred to as **global warming**, one of its main consequences. While there are still some controversies over the question in how far global warming is manmade, there can be no doubt that a larger concentration of so-called **greenhouse gases** in the atmosphere is responsible for it. As human action, like the combustion of fossil fuels or deforestation, contributes to emissions of CO_2 and other greenhouse gases, the ⇒ United Nations Climate Change Conferences have been set up to meet regularly and discuss measures to reduce these. International treaties, most notably the **Kyoto Protocol** or the more recent **Paris Agreement**, formulate goals like keeping the increase in average temperature below 2 °C. However, according to environmentalists, the countries signing them only make vague promises and do not offer binding commitments. Infamous examples include US President Trump's repeated announcements to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. The disastrous consequences of climate change, like glacier melting, rising sea levels, extreme weather conditions, destruction of natural habitat by desertification or flooding, are likely to present ever more challenging dangers in the future. For many young people around the world, current political measures do not go far enough. They have started to show their dissatisfaction openly, in the "**Fridays for Future**" school strikes or in various protest actions organised by "**Extinction Rebellion**" and other activist groups, for example.

Commonwealth of Nations

The Commonwealth of Nations can be seen as a successor of the ⇒ **British Empire**. During the period of **decolonisation** in the first half of the 20th century, many of the newly independent countries decided to keep close ties to the British motherland. To that aim, they joined the Commonwealth of Nations, which was originally defined in the Balfour Declaration (1926) and later in the Statue of Westminster (1931). The London Declaration of 1949 described the Commonwealth in the form it still has today, namely as an intergovernmental organisation of "free and equal" member states. The Commonwealth currently consists of 56 member states, of whom 15 still recognise the British monarch as their head of state, while there are also newer member states that are not historically linked to the British Empire at all. Membership in the Commonwealth does not entail any legal obligations. Instead, the countries aim for close cooperation in economy, education and government, based on a shared history and culture and on common values like democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Conservative Party (UK)

The second big party in UK politics, besides the ⇒ **Labour Party**, was founded in 1834. It emerged from the former Tory Party, and so the Conservatives are still referred to as "**Tories**" today. Before Labour became popular, the party's main rival were the so-called "Whigs", the Liberal Party. Traditionally, the Conservative Party stood for **little state interference** and **free-market capitalism**. **Margaret Thatcher's** terms in power (1979–1990), for instance, resulted in cuts in social welfare and a decrease in trade unions' influence. However, her "ruthless" style of government paved the way for Tony Blair's successes with the Labour Party, which is why the Conservatives formed the **opposition** for 13 years from 1997 to 2010. During that time, the party underwent a change, becoming slightly **more focused on social programmes and state regulation**. Since 2010, the Conservatives have been back in power, first in a coalition with the Liberal Democrats, which resulted from a hung parliament in which neither Labour nor the Conservatives had a clear majority. In 2015, the party under Prime Minister **David Cameron** won back the majority. During his election campaign, Cameron, who himself was pro-European, had announced a referendum to let the British public decide whether the UK should remain part of the EU or not. Surprisingly for many, the referendum resulted in a slight majority for "Leave", which is why Cameron resigned and his former Home Secretary **Theresa May** took over. In troubled political times, she had to try to effect the ⇒ Brexit as smoothly as possible. After several failed attempts to get her Brexit deal ratified in Parliament, she was finally replaced by **Boris Johnson** in 2019. In 2022, political scandals forced him to resign as well. He was succeeded by **Liz Truss**, who was followed by **Rishi Sunak** only eight weeks later. In the 2024 election, Labour defeated the Conservatives in a landslide victory.

constitutional monarchy

That the United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy is best described by the sentence "**the monarch reigns, but does not rule**" – in other words, the monarch is the **Head of State**, but his or her powers are limited by constitutional conventions, both written and unwritten. When looking at their formal titles and functions, the monarchs of the UK seem to be very powerful: they open and dissolve Parliament, have to give their royal assent to all laws passed in the UK, appoint and dismiss the prime minister and other government ministers, have weekly consultations with the prime minister, are Commander in Chief of the armed forces, Head of the Church of England and Fount of Justice. However, all these roles are merely **representative** in nature and are strictly controlled by the unwritten constitution. According to regular opinion polls, a large proportion of the British population is **in favour** of keeping the monarchy in this representative role. They point out that the Monarch, who is above party politics, can act both as a final control to stop tyranny and especially as a rallying point of **stability and unity**, particularly in times of political unrest and dissent. Furthermore, the Royal Family do charitable work, are good ambassadors for the country abroad and also serve as a tourist attraction, which brings in more money than the monarchy costs the taxpayer. However, since the **death of Queen Elizabeth II** in September 2022, who, as the longest-reigning monarch in history, was very popular amongst her subjects, renewed calls for the country to have an elected Head of State have arisen. Support for the monarchy is waning particularly among younger British people and in many former colonies that still retain the British Monarch as their official Head of State. In addition to bemoaning its cost, anti-royalists condemn the monarchy as **undemocratic**, because it perpetuates outdated principles of a ruling class defined by birth rather than merit, as well as **imperialistic**, because of its colonial heritage. Furthermore, highly publicised scandals, such as what was dubbed "**Megxit**", when Prince Harry and his wife Meghan left the Royal Family amidst criticism of racism, threaten to tarnish the Royal Family's reputation. On the other hand, the backlash against Harry and Meghan for their decision to speak out publicly about their issues with the Royal Family has also revealed lingering support for those Royals who serve their country dutifully. So it remains to be seen whether "Megxit" will have a negative effect on the monarchy.

consumerism

Consumerism is the attitude that ever more buying and spending is a positive thing. Consumer societies are characterised by consumers buying things not only because they are useful or necessary, but rather because they are advertised and subsequently seen as status symbols. Therefore, products are seldom used ⇒ sustainably, but rather replaced quickly by something newer despite them still functioning perfectly. Consumerism is criticised for producing **waste** in large quantities, not being environmentally friendly and promoting **materialism** and **superficiality**. On the other hand, consumerism can be seen as a **sign of progress** with humans rising above the mere essentials of survival and being able to focus on "unnecessary" pleasures like leisure or culture instead.

cultural imperialism

Cultural imperialism means that a country, which is more powerful in economic, political or military terms, imposes its culture and values on a less powerful country, thereby transforming or replacing its original culture. Historical examples of cultural imperialism can be found in the Roman Empire as well as throughout the periods of European colonisation. In recent years, people speak of an **Americanisation** of many countries, by which the American way of life, its fashion, culture and language (⇒ lingua franca) is imposed on other countries throughout the world.

death penalty

The death penalty, also known as **capital punishment**, is a highly controversial form of legal punishment. While the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the ⇒ European Union explicitly bans it and the ⇒ United Nations has made several attempts at a resolution to prohibit it, more than 60 % of the world population live in countries that still allow it. Among these countries is the USA where 27 states as well as the federal government still retain the death penalty. Proponents of capital punishment argue that it is a **fair retribution** for severe crimes, that it can act as a **deterrent**, it **prevents** offenders from **repeating a crime** and it is **cheaper** than a long prison sentence during which the state is responsible for the upkeep of a prisoner. However, opponents of the death penalty cite regular studies that the **deterrent effect is not working** and that government-funded executions are **not cheaper** than prison sentences. Furthermore, they oppose it as **inhumane** and violating the ultimate human right, the right to life. As it is an **irreversible** form of punishment, miscarriages of justice are especially grave. Furthermore, adversaries deplore the **culture of violence** that is created through avenging violence by means of violence. Another argument that is often cited against the death penalty is that it is employed in a **discriminatory** fashion, primarily targeting members of racial, ethnic or social minorities.

Democratic Party (USA)

The Democratic Party is one of the two major parties in US politics, its main rival being the ⇒ **Republican Party**. It was founded in 1828 and is the oldest political party in the world which is still active. Its party programme has changed a lot from being historically rather conservative and supporting economic liberalism to nowadays promoting **social and economic equality**, supporting a **welfare state** and moderate governmental intervention in the economy. Further points on the Democratic agenda are **environmental protection**, stricter **gun control**, an ⇒ **immigration reform** and equality for **same-sex marriages**, among others. Many women, ethnic minorities, academics and young people tend to vote Democratic. So far, seventeen Democrats have been President of the United States, for instance **Barack Obama** who served as the first African American president from 2008 to 2016. The party's symbol is a donkey and it is typically associated with the colour blue.

devolution

Devolution describes a process by which a central government delegates some powers to governments on a local level. Devolution, in contrast to ⇒ federalism, which is constitutionally fixed, may be temporary and the authorities of the local governments might be withdrawn by the central government, which remains in control of the process. In the UK, Tony Blair's New ⇒ Labour Party started a modernisation process in 1997, which ultimately resulted in separate local governmental units for Scotland (**Scottish Parliament**), Wales (**National Assembly for Wales**), Northern Ireland (**Northern Ireland Assembly**) and London (**London Assembly**), but not for England, as some critics have repeatedly pointed out since then. For some political parties, however, these measures of devolution have not gone far enough and they demand complete independence for their countries. Most notably among them are **Sinn Féin** in Northern Ireland, whose members abstain from taking their places in the UK Parliament in protest, **Plaid Cymru** in Wales and the influential **Scottish National Party** (**SNP**). In a 2014 referendum on whether Scotland should become an independent country, however, 55 % of all voters wanted to remain a part of the UK. Following the ⇒ Brexit referendum in 2016, in which 62 % of the Scottish electorate voted for "Remain", renewed cries for an independent Scotland, which would be able to make its own deal with the ⇒ EU, have come up.

digital revolution

The digital revolution is sometimes called the **third industrial revolution** after the first industrial (or mechanical) revolution in the 18th and

19th centuries, when manual labour was largely replaced by machines, and the second industrial (or technological) revolution, which saw new inventions like electricity around 1900. The digital revolution took place around the year 2000 and was characterised by the exponential growth in the use of computers and especially the ⇒ **Internet**. Some even speak of a fourth industrial revolution that has come about in more recent years with mobile devices, ever-progressive technologies such as ⇒ AI, and the ubiquity of digitisation in all aspects of life. Digitisation has had an enormous impact, both on the **world of work** and on people's personal habits. While it has enormous potential for speeding up processes or enabling international cooperation without necessitating flights around the world which add to the carbon footprint, there are also tremendous challenges connected with the digital workplace (and society). **Remote working**, for instance, can mean more flexibility and thereby allow employees to coordinate their working and family environments better. On the other hand, it can also lead to employers having direct or indirect expectations of their staff's permanent availability and thereby to the lack of a healthy **work-life balance**. Furthermore, it is feared that social skills, such as communicative skills, empathy and focus, will suffer from contact that is virtual rather than face-to-face.

dystopia

A dystopia is an imagined future society with **negative** characteristics. In literary dystopias, the authors often **exaggerate present-day negative developments** like environmental destruction, increasing mechanisation, surveillance mechanisms, etc. to make their readers aware and warn them of these social evils. Dystopias often have distinctive science-fiction features because they present technological advancements that are not (yet) possible in present societies. However, they are shown as realistic or as metaphors for already existing dangers and problems. Typical examples of dystopian fiction are George Orwell's *1984*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy or Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Elizabethan Age

The Elizabethan Age is named after **Queen Elizabeth I**, who reigned from 1558 to 1603. It was a time of economic prosperity, relative domestic stability and successful foreign policy. The Elizabethan Age also saw the beginnings of the ⇒ **British Empire**, with the power of the Royal Navy growing and the first overseas colonies being founded during that epoch. At the same time, it was a "**golden age**" from a cultural perspective, because the arts, particularly the dramatic arts, profited from the economic climate as well as from the support of Elizabeth and her successor James I. Playwrights like Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson and, most famously, **William Shakespeare** were active under Elizabeth I and James I.

EU (European Union)

The European Union is a **political and economic union** of currently 27 member states, after the United Kingdom's electorate voted to leave the EU, a process known as ⇒ **Brexit**. After the Second World War, which had left large parts of Europe in destruction, closer European cooperation was seen as an effective measure to prevent further conflict and establish lasting peace and security. First steps were taken in the economic sphere and consequently, the forerunners of the EU were economic alliances, like the **European Economic Community (EEC)** which was founded in 1957. Its six founding states were France, West Germany, Italy and the three Benelux countries. Britain joined in 1973, together with Denmark and Austria, and other countries followed.

From a predominantly economical alliance, the EU (established through the **Maastricht Treaty** of 1992/1993) developed into an emerging superpower with global influence in the political sphere as well. While the **single market** with its demand for the "free movement of people, goods, services and capital" remains one of the union's pillars, the EU's growing influence in other political spheres was reflected in the **Treaty of Lisbon** of 2009, which regulated a reform of the EU's political institutions and aimed for a more powerful union in foreign policy and other decisions.

In the UK, **Euroscepticism** has always been widespread. For instance, the island nation did not join the monetary union, to which currently 20 member states belong and share the Euro as their common currency. Fuelled by economic crises as well as disagreements about ⇒ immigration politics, anti-European movements or parties like **UKIP** (United Kingdom Independence Party) with their criticism of the EU's bureaucracy and Britain's lack of sovereignty gained momentum and resulted in the **2016 referendum's outcome** that Britain would be the first country to leave the European Union. In how far the union, which is praised as a triumph of cooperation and peace by some and as a bureaucratic nightmare by others, will suffer and be destabilised from this move remains to be seen.

fake news

Fake news is a term to describe the **deliberate misinformation** of the public. The times of **social media** have often been described as a **post-truth era:** information is not only spread by quality papers (⇒ print media) which are committed to use reliable sources and to be as objective as possible, but anyone can become a journalist and influence others in their formation of opinions. If even politicians call their statements "**alternative facts**" instead of outright lies and use the term "fake news" to disparage critical reporting, they contribute to the truth becoming more and more difficult to grasp. These populists, who manage to take in voters by telling them what they want to hear, are also aided by so-called **filter bubbles**. These refer to a certain selectiveness when it comes to providing people with information. Social media sites use algorithms which suggest news content according to the users' supposed preferences. Thereby, it is quite common for people to only have their own opinions corroborated instead of seeing things from different perspectives, which would be necessary for becoming open-minded and informed members of society.

federalism

Federalism is a form of government in which a central government shares the power with regional or state governments. In contrast to a system of ⇒ devolution, in a federal system, the separation of powers is fixed in the constitution. The USA is a typical example of a federal democracy.

first-past-the-post

First-past-the-post voting is an electoral system in which the candidate with a **simple majority** wins a seat while all other votes are lost. In an exemplary case of three candidates, in which candidate A received 35 % of all votes, candidate B received 34 % and candidate C 31 %, candidate A would win the seat although a majority of people voted against him and the other two candidates, despite being favoured by almost as many voters as candidate A, would not be considered in the outcome of the election at all. A synonymous expression is "**winner takes all**". Criticism of this electoral system focuses on the number of votes that are "wasted" and on the subsequent **lack of representation** of large parts of the electorate. Proponents of this electoral system, on the other hand, point out that it produces **strong majorities**, which in turn should guarantee a government capable of taking action.

frontier

In its general meaning, a frontier is a border or borderline. In American history, the term "frontier" refers to the borderline between land already colonised by European settlers and the "open land" west of it that was settled mainly in the second half of the 19th century. That this land was populated by Native Americans and these were often brutally driven off their land or even murdered is often forgotten in **national myths**. These romanticise the frontier and the **westward expansion** as shaping the country's character with its focus on freedom, determination, self-reliance, individualism and democracy.

gender (in)equality

Gender equality is one of the stated aims of the ⇒ United Nations. It does not mean that all genders have to be treated the same, but that each individual regardless of their sex should have **equal rights and opportunities**, as far as education, career choices or political power are concerned. While in many countries important aims of earlier feminist movements have been achieved, for instance equal **voting rights** or theoretical legal equality, discrimination of women often continues in practice, for example when it comes to **equal pay for equal work** or the proportion of women in positions of **professional or political leadership**. On the other hand, **gender quotas** to equalise these proportions are also met with criticism. Furthermore, institutions that are largely based on traditions, like religious communities, for example, but also the media often still adhere to patriarchal structures or propagate common **gender stereotypes**.

Progressive gender equality movements do not merely take into account men and women, but also consider other genders, who do not belong to either of the two, and their rights.

genetic engineering

Genetic engineering means the **manipulation of an organism's genome**. It is an innovative branch of scientific research and is employed in different fields of biotechnology. In medicine, **stem cell research** and its application in therapeutic cloning nurses hopes that genetic defects as well as organ failure and other diseases might soon be curable. In view of an ever-growing world population and the subsequent troubles of famine and undernourishment, the breeding of so-called superfoods is hailed as a solution. **Genetically modified organisms (GMOs)** generally promise better resistance to pests or diseases and could thereby make agricultural production quicker, easier and cheaper. On the other hand, genetic engineering is also met with criticism and raises **ethical and moral concerns**. Worries about the safety of GMOs for human consumption or the social justice of expensive medical treatments being available to only a select few are merely the tip of the iceberg. Reproductive cloning or the breeding of so-called "designer babies" conjures up horror visions of perfectly standardised people and the loss of an essential quality of humanity, namely individualism. Similarly, GMOs could threaten biodiversity and thereby cause a loss of everything natural in exchange for a genetically engineered artificiality.

globalisation

Globalisation describes **networking on a worldwide scale**. This means that goods are exchanged and people as well as institutions move, interact and communicate globally. While some experts see globalisation as a relatively recent phenomenon, others argue that it has existed for hundreds or even thousands of years, albeit on a much smaller scale. Modern globalisation has mainly been pushed forward by progress in **transportation** methods and especially the rapid advances in **communication technology**.

The **economy** is one of the fields most heavily influenced by globalisation processes. While proponents of globalisation focus on advantages like growth and development, critics point out that not everyone profits from globalisation in equal measure: Big companies and industrialised countries might be able to maximise their cost-efficiency through **outsourcing of work** and free trade agreements (for example ⇒ USMCA, ⇒ ASEAN or the ⇒ European Union's single market), but workers in less developed countries are exploited in **sweatshops** with inhumane working conditions and small businesses face a hard time in competition with megacompanies. Additionally, the interconnection in finances also means that a national crisis will easily turn into a global one.

Besides the economic sector, **culture** and **politics** are also influenced by globalisation. In both sectors, benefits and challenges of the phenomenon should be considered. Culturally and educationally, an exchange of people and information guarantees the **dissemination of knowledge**. On the other hand, people fear a loss of individual values, traditions and cultures through a form of ⇒ **cultural imperialism** when dominant ideas spread and displace local ones. In politics, international alliances like the ⇒ **EU** or the ⇒ **UN** pursue the goal of peace and stability through more cooperation. International challenges, like the threat of terrorism or ⇒ climate change, might be tackled best in international committees. ⇒ **Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)**, especially humanitarian ones, also have a larger impact if they function worldwide. However, many problems that they have to tackle are also exacerbated by the process of globalisation. Intensified air traffic and an expansion of infrastructure contribute to **global**

warming. Terrorist organisations frequently make use of the ⇒ **Internet** to spread their propaganda and acquire followers. Viruses and diseases can infect populations worldwide, as the **Corona pandemic** demonstrated in 2020.

Another example which shows globalisation as a two-sided coin is ⇒ **migration**. On the one hand, it is often perceived as something desirable bringing new ideas and input. On the other hand, refugees fleeing from the negative effects of international contact, exploitation, poverty, war or environmental destruction, show that social inequality is not necessarily lessened through globalisation.

Great Depression

The Great Depression is a period of severe **economic decline** throughout the world, starting in the USA with the Wall Street stock market crash of 29 October 1929 (“**Black Tuesday**”) and lasting until the late 1930s. It was marked by an almost halting international trade, falling demands and prices and mass unemployment. In the USA, a severe drought in the Great Plains area compounded the crisis and hit farmers and agricultural workers especially hard. President Roosevelt (1933–1945) and his **New Deal programme**, a series of government controlled economic regulations, helped alleviate some of the Great Depression's worst effects.

Homestead Act

The Homestead Act, which was passed in **1862**, promoted settlement in the western part of the North American continent as it promised areas of free land, so-called homesteads, to anyone willing to work and settle on that land. This was an incentive for many, including overseas immigrants, to **move west** and thereby shift the ⇒ **frontier** further towards the Pacific Ocean. Homesteaders often had a hard life, especially in dry areas where the amount of land given to them was hardly sufficient to produce enough for a living, let alone to become as prosperous as they had imagined. On the other hand, success stories contributed to the myth of the ⇒ **American Dream** and the land of unlimited opportunities. The other side of the coin is that the westward movement and the promise of “free land” dispossessed **Native Americans** who were the original inhabitants of that “free land”.

immigration (UK)

Especially in the wake of the ⇒ **British Empire**, the population in the UK has changed and become more ethnically diverse. While the country attracted **Irish refugees** in large numbers even before the end of World War II (e. g. during the **Great Famine** of 1845 to 1849), the foreign-born population from ⇒ **Commonwealth** countries surged after the passing of the **British Nationality Act in 1948**, which allowed almost unrestricted immigration for people from former or current British Empire countries. This accounts for the high numbers of immigrants from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Caribbean, South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and Hong Kong. In response to a growing scepticism of parts of the population as well as politicians towards mass migration, several **acts** were passed in the 1960s and 1970s which made it more difficult for immigrants to gain British citizenship even if they were from Commonwealth countries. From then on, prospective immigrants have had to fulfil **certain criteria**, like having special skills for which there is demand in the UK, to be allowed to stay in the country and ultimately apply for citizenship. With the entry of the UK into the ⇒ **European Union**, the free movement of people guaranteed by the Treaty of Maastricht (1992/1993) brought in thousands of immigrants, mainly from central and eastern Europe. However, conditions for these have changed since Brexit became official in 2020/2021. Another proportion of immigrants is made up of **refugees** and asylum seekers, for example from Somalia (1980s/1990s) or, in recent years, from Eritrea, Iran, Pakistan, Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. **Restricting migration**, illegal migration in particular, has been a top priority for many subsequent governments.

immigration (USA)

The USA is widely known as a **country of immigrants**. Apart from the **Native Americans**, who make up only about 1 % of the current US population, all inhabitants indeed came as immigrants to the country at one point or another, voluntarily or by force.

The first wave of immigration, starting in the early 17th century, is known as **colonial immigration** because then, mainly British settlers came to found colonies, like the first British settlement in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. A few years later, in 1620, the so-called **Pilgrim Fathers** sailed to the "New World". They were **Puritans**, a group of English Protestants, who were not content with the Church of England's still too "Catholic" structure and searched for a "New Canaan" on the American continent. Apart from the English, other early settlers predominantly had Scottish, German, French or Swiss origins. The 17th century was also the time when the first **Africans** were forcefully shipped to the colonies as **slaves**, a practice that continued up until the 19th century.

The biggest waves of voluntary immigration came from the **mid-19th up to the early 20th century**. Apart from the predominantly **Protestant** settlers from central and western Europe as well as many Scandinavians, the mid-19th century saw a wave of **Irish Catholics** coming to the country. When in 1848, gold was found in California, it attracted large numbers of **Chinese immigrants**, who added to the diversity of the country. The predominantly White Anglo-Saxon population felt threatened and reacted with the first of several racially discriminatory exclusion laws, the **Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882**. Between 1880 and 1920, more than 20 million people came to the USA, among them also **southern Europeans** and many **Jewish people**, who escaped religious persecution in eastern Europe, thereby adding to the ethnical and religious diversity. Due to the massive influx, the first official federal immigration centre was opened on **Ellis Island** in the Bay of New York in 1892. It remained in use until 1954 and has become one of the main symbols of American immigration, similar to the **Statue of Liberty**. It was erected on Liberty Island in New York's harbour in 1886 and has since been a powerful symbol of the USA welcoming immigrants and promising them freedom and a better life. This is famously expressed in Emma Lazarus's sonnet engraved on a bronze plaque inside the Statue which addresses the "**huddled masses** yearning to breathe free".

Up until the early 20th century, the country indeed welcomed immigrants as they were urgently needed to cultivate the land or work in the country's progressing industries. After the First World War, attitudes changed, however, and **immigration quotas** and laws severely restricted the numbers of newcomers. Another change came with the ⇒ Civil Rights Movement's achievements. **Race-based quotas** were **abolished** which is why after 1965, **Asian and Latin American** people made up large proportions of immigrants. Even if the peak time of immigration was in earlier centuries, the USA remains a land of promise for many and due to higher restrictions, the number of **illegal immigrants**, especially from Central American countries, has increased. Immigration reform remains a hotly debated issue, with former President Obama promising improvements, especially for the children of illegal immigrants. President Trump, however, propagated a "zero tolerance" policy towards illegal immigration. His plans to build a wall at the US-Mexican border and to repeal many of his predecessor's reforms illustrated this attitude. Judging by Trump's second election victory in 2024, anti-immigration sentiments seem to persist and immigration reform will probably be a topic to be dealt with for generations to come.

Internet

The use of computers, the Internet and its applications in almost every aspect of modern life has transformed the world in the last decades so profoundly that people speak of a ⇒ **digital revolution**, comparable to the Industrial Revolution in earlier centuries. Technological progress has not only been the main driver of ⇒ **globalisation**, making worldwide cooperation and communication possible and transforming the economy and the world of work, it has also affected **individual behaviour** and lifestyles by changing traditional media use, access to information, leisure activities and personal interaction.

Internet enthusiasts praise its advantages in making knowledge accessible to everyone, connecting people from faraway places and facilitating a flexible approach to work and everyday life (for instance, by providing online shopping services, video conferences, etc.). The **convenience** provided by Internet services, measurable in savings of time and money, can hardly be overestimated. However, critics regularly point out the downsides connected with widespread use of the Internet: Being theoretically reachable from anywhere and at any time of the day can put a lot of stress on individuals. The masses of information available can be overwhelming especially as there are hardly any checks on what can be published on websites so that ⇒ "**fake news**" and unreliable sources when taken at face value present a constant challenge. Furthermore, **data theft** threatens personal privacy as well as intellectual property. On an individual level, many deplore the effect the Internet and especially social media sites have on everyday life and especially on personal relationships: People do not need to leave their homes any longer to go shopping, to get access to books, films or newspapers or to be in contact with friends. While the economic challenges for small shops, for libraries, newspapers or radio stations are easily measurable, **changes in human interaction** are less tangible. Communication seems to be getting more superficial with less face-to-face contact and meaningful exchange. More and more people are almost addicted to their smartphones and they often substitute real-life experiences with being active on social media. While access to information and communication has become easier, cheaper, quicker and more global, depth, intensity and focus on the here and now seem harder to pertain.

interventionism

In the USA's stance towards foreign relations, interventionism describes one end on the spectrum of possible approaches, with ⇒ **isolationism** being its opposite. It refers to the country's willingness to interfere in global conflicts in order to promote its own vision of the world and to preserve its economic and political power. US interventionism was especially distinctive in the **Cold War** years when out of fear of a communist expansion, the US government not only financed, but also actively fought wars in faraway parts of the world, most notably in **Korea**, ⇒ **Vietnam** or the **Gulf region**. The proclaimed ⇒ **War on Terrorism**, by which the USA professed to rid the world of an "axis of evil", can be seen in a similar light. By being "the policeman of the world", the USA has gained both admirers and enemies. Some stress the most powerful country in the world's humanitarian duty and refer to still-relevant aspects of ⇒ **Manifest Destiny**, like bringing freedom and democracy to the world. Enemies, however, reproach the USA for being ideologically biased and only interested in furthering its own standing in the world with no regard for foreign cultures or interests. This ambiguity can also be seen in critical discussions about the ⇒ **NATO's** role and responsibility.

isolationism

Isolationism is a stance in foreign policy to **focus on internal affairs** and not mingle in foreign conflicts. In its early years up until the 20th century, the USA practised a foreign policy of isolationism, focusing on internal conflicts, like the ⇒ Civil War, or on expanding the country on the American continent. The country entered very reluctantly in both World Wars and only after the Second World War did it take its role as "global policeman and peacemaker" more seriously. Donald Trump's election slogan "America First" rang in both a renewed retreat from international affairs with a focus on domestic politics and at the same time a more ruthless assertion of American interests with all possible, including military, means. Only time can tell where future administrations will rank on the spectrum between isolationism and ⇒ **interventionism**.

Labour Party (UK)

Because of its ⇒ **first-past-the-post system** that favours big parties, the UK is often described as a two-party-system with the majority party forming the government and its rival party the opposition. Although there are other parties, the Labour Party and the ⇒ **Conservative Party** are still the dominating players in UK politics. The Labour Party was founded in 1900 and its explicit aim was to support the **working class**. It was strongly supported by trade unions and the socialist Fabian Society. After the Second World War, Labour won a majority in Britain. The resulting government is remembered for the **nationalisation of many industries** and for introducing **extensive welfare measures**, like founding the **National Health Service** (**NHS**). However, after many years in the opposition, the party changed under Tony Blair's "**New Labour**" approach. Tony Blair won three consecutive elections (in 1997, 2001 and 2005) with his compromise between socialism, in which state interference in the economy and ⇒ social security is paramount, and individual responsibility. He also modernised the country by reforming the House of Lords and paving the way for ⇒ devolution. However, Tony Blair was also harshly criticised, not only for his anti-traditional Labour politics, but also for entering into the Iraq War in 2003. From 2010 onwards, the party was in the **opposition**, finally winning a **landslide victory** in the 2024 general election under **Keir Starmer**.

lingua franca

A lingua franca is a language used as a **means of communication** between speakers who do not share the same mother tongue. In our modern world, which is shaped by ⇒ **globalisation**, English has become the lingua franca in many **intercultural interactions, whether private, political or business-related**. One of the reasons for this development is that due to the history of the ⇒ British Empire, English is used as an official language in many countries throughout the world. Another reason is the economic, political, cultural and military power of the USA, which makes the country an influential leader in many areas of commerce, research and, particularly, technology (⇒ cultural imperialism). English is the language which is most widely taught as a second language. There are more non-native English speakers than native ones throughout the world.

Magna Carta

Magna Carta is a historical document that fixed an agreement between King John I and the barons in **1215**. As such, it is also part of Britain's ⇒ **uncodified constitution**. Its role as an important document of democracy is sometimes exaggerated, because it **never concerned ordinary people's rights**, but protected barons from illegal imprisonment or unfair taxation. Yet, it was one of the first documents to limit the king's absolute power and emphasise the **rule of law** instead.

Manifest Destiny

The term was coined in 1845, when it was used to justify the **westward expansion** of the United States and the occupation of foreign territory, like parts of Texas, which were at the time Mexican. The belief in Manifest Destiny to spread the US vision of freedom and democracy is connected with a belief in the country's **moral superiority and exceptionalism**, its role as an example for the perfect form of government and even its status as "God's own country". When the USA alludes to its moral duty to bring peace and democracy to other countries in more recent conflicts, this could be seen as a modern version of Manifest Destiny. The downside of the concept is that it was used to justify the near extinction of Native Americans or military interventions with thousands of casualties for the sake of democracy and "civilisation".

melting pot

The melting pot is a metaphor which is often used to describe the American society in which millions of immigrants from all over the world are formed into a harmonious whole through the common experience of living in the USA. However, in recent years, the concept of the melting pot, which propagates **cultural assimilation**, has come under criticism with other metaphors like a mosaic, a ⇒ salad bowl or a kaleidoscope being preferred.

migration

Migration describes the movement of people from one place to another with the aim of settling down somewhere new. Its subcategories are ⇒ **immigration**, coming to a new place to settle there, and **emigration**, leaving a place to settle somewhere else. There are different reasons why people migrate, for example to live free from war and oppression, to have better employment opportunities or to live in a more favourable climate. Based on these reasons, the most common forms of migration are called **political migration**, **economic migration** and **environmental migration**. Political, economic and environmental reasons can be further categorised into so-called **push and pull factors**, reasons why people move away from one place and are drawn to another. Especially in the case of very pressing political (i. e. oppression or persecution) or environmental (i. e. natural disasters) push factors, migrants can be categorised as **refugees** and are protected by special human rights.

NATO

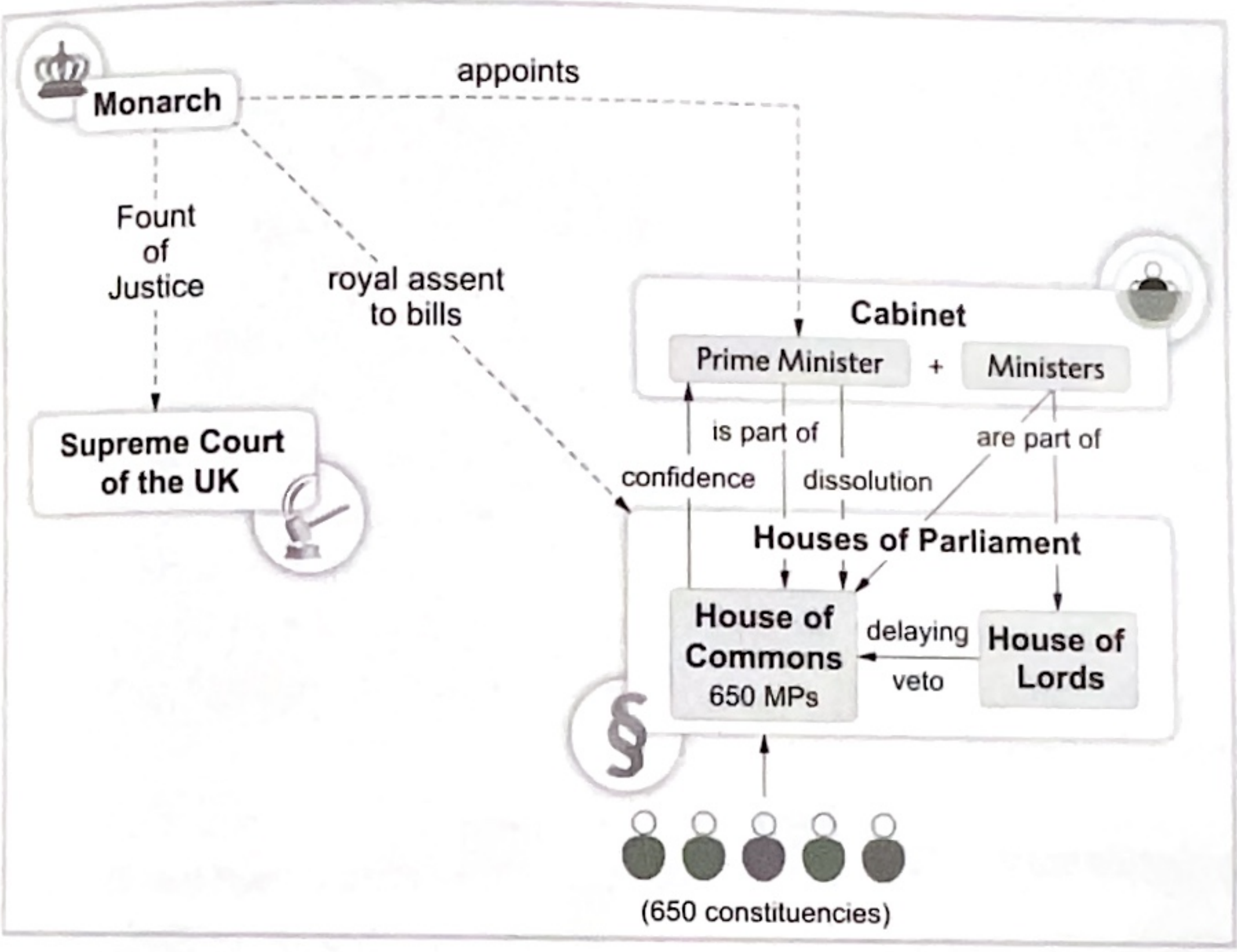
NATO is short for North Atlantic Treaty Organization. It was founded as an alliance to guarantee the military safety of its originally twelve European and North American member states in 1949. Its foundation dates back to the period of the **Cold War** between the USA and the Soviet Union, and its main principle is of **mutual military support** in the case of an attack on one of its member states. Proponents hail the NATO as an important military and political tool of cooperation between its member states, which currently number more than 30, while opponents accuse it of entrenching divisions and militarising the world.

NGOs (non-governmental organisations)

NGOs are **non-profit** organisations that are, at least by definition, **independent from any government**. They often work on an international level although there are also regional NGOs. Usually, they fight for **human rights**, represent civilian interests and have become especially important as a counterweight to profit-oriented economic and political alliances in a globalised world. A famous example is Amnesty International, an NGO fighting for the implementation of human rights all around the world.

parliamentary democracy (UK)

In a parliamentary democracy, unlike a presidential democracy, the executive branch of government derives its power from the **legislative**. In the UK, for example, the leader of the executive, the country's prime minister, is a member of parliament, usually the head of the majority party. So, unlike the president of the USA, the British prime minister normally commands a majority in parliament. The **British parliament** consists of two chambers, the **House of Commons** and the **House of Lords**. While the members of the House of Commons are elected by the voters and the legislature rests in their hands, the House of Lords, consisting of Lords Spiritual and Lords Temporal, who are appointed or inherit their seats, has often been criticised as undemocratic. In several reforms, many of the Lords' competences were undercut and their structure modernised. There are fewer hereditary peers, for example, and the passing on of peerages from one generation to the next shall be thoroughly phased out in the future. However, the House of Lords can still influence politics in delaying laws by vetoing them. Furthermore, until 2009 when the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom was opened, the third branch of power, the judiciary, was connected to the House of Lords as well. Officially, the UK is a parliamentary democracy under a ⇒ **constitutional monarchy**, but the monarch as head of state does not yield real power, which instead lies in the hands of the head of government, the prime minister.



partisan division

Partisan division is a term that is used to describe the rancour and unwillingness to compromise with which the two big political parties in the USA, the ⇒ **Republican Party** and the ⇒ **Democratic Party**, often oppose each other.

print media

The print media are among the oldest forms of communication. They include newspapers and magazines, but also banners, posters, etc. Attracting the masses only became possible through a mixture of widespread elementary education and cheaper prices for newspapers. In the UK, for instance, the 19th century can be seen as the time of birth of the **popular press** when newspaper taxes were abolished and the print media turned into an instrument of **mass communication**. As such, the media fulfil an important democratic role because they serve as educators of the masses. Therefore, they are sometimes called the "**Fourth Estate**", controlling the other branches of government and ideally being free and independent from them. Of course, newspaper agencies have to work profitably, which is why it is often argued that they are not really independent and not fit to report on controversial issues but rather conform to their readers' expectations in order to be popular. Consequently, the traditional British distinction between **quality papers**, so-called **broadsheets**, and **popular papers**, so-called **tabloids** because of their smaller format or red-tops because of their coloured headlines, is not always clear-cut. Nowadays, almost all newspapers print in colour or are published in handy formats to cater for their readers' tastes. However, the "seriousness" of the papers' contents still differs: While some newspapers try to boost their readership numbers by reporting more and more sensationalist stories, others attempt to distinguish themselves from the newer forms of mass media, like television and especially the ⇒ **Internet**, through more reliable reporting.

race relations (USA)

How members of various ethnic groups interact and are treated, for instance in the economy or in politics, but also by society at large, is often subsumed under the term race relations. For the USA as a typical ⇒ **immigrant country**, accommodating large masses from countries all over the world, assimilating them into a common American culture or maintaining diversity in a peaceful and functioning multicultural society have always presented major challenges. After the achievements of the ⇒ **Civil Rights Movement** of the 1960s, optimists claimed that society was now more open and tolerant, and that systemic racism had become a thing of the past. However, critics point out that disadvantages of ethnic minorities still persist, especially with regards to African Americans. Statistically, they do not have the same access to educational opportunities and are more prone to poverty than the White majority. Another point of criticism is the treatment of African Americans by the police. As a result of African Americans being disproportionately targeted and often even killed by the police, the **Black Lives Matter** movement formed – ironically during the presidency of Barack Obama, the first African American US president – and actively protests against still widespread racist practices.

Reconstruction

The Reconstruction Period is the time in American history after the ⇒ **Civil War** (1861–1865). During this period, the reintegration of the former Confederate States into the Union and their economic reconstruction as well as the treatment of the newly freed former slaves presented major political challenges. The so-called **Reconstruction Amendments** officially abolished slavery (**13th Amendment**, 1865), extended citizenship to all former slaves (**14th Amendment**, 1868) and gave them the right to vote (**15th Amendment**, 1870). However, reality often looked different: especially in the southern states, state laws and regulations undermined official politics. The so-called "**Jim Crow laws**" caused segregation and made it factually impossible for African Americans to exercise their right to vote or other citizenship rights.

Republican Party (USA)

The Republican Party, also known as the GOP (Grand Old Party), is one of the two major parties in US politics, its main rival being the ⇒ **Democratic Party**. It was founded in 1854 and has historically been noteworthy for being the **anti-slavery party** during the ⇒ Civil War. Today, it is known to promote **conservatism**, **lower taxes** and a **free market capitalism**. Furthermore, many Republicans are in favour of a **strong national defence**, **gun rights** and **traditional values**. With its focus on self-reliance and independence, the GOP appeals especially to "people strong enough to look after themselves", but also to voters from rural areas as well as strongly religious people, like the Evangelicals with their "pro life" anti-abortion stance, among other traditional values. So far, nineteen Republicans have been President of the United States. The first was **Abraham Lincoln**, who served from 1861 until he was assassinated in 1865 and who is famous for finally abolishing slavery. The party's symbol is an elephant and it is typically associated with the colour red.

Roaring Twenties

In many western countries, the **1920s** are called the Roaring Twenties because this was a decade of **economic prosperity**, especially in the USA where the financial sector developed to become the strongest in the world, as well as **innovations in culture and technology**. The spirit of new beginnings and a break with old traditions is not only reflected in fashion, music or other cultural phenomena of the time, but also in political changes, like the granting of the right to vote to women in many countries. The hopeful, optimistic atmosphere of the Roaring Twenties ended with the **Wall Street Crash** in 1929 and the onset of the ⇒ **Great Depression**.

salad bowl

The salad bowl is a metaphor that is employed to describe the USA's **multicultural society**. It may be preferable to the traditional ⇒ **melting pot** concept because in a salad bowl, the original ingredients remain visible while they combine to make a successful whole. Thereby, the traditional melting pot's image of "forced assimilation" is avoided. Instead, different ethnic groups are encouraged to keep their distinct backgrounds because these are all necessary to make up the whole of the USA's society.

social class (UK)

Social class is typically defined by markers such as birth, wealth, education and occupation. The most general model distinguishes three social classes: the **upper class**, traditionally nobility, the **middle class**, which is made up of so-called **white-collar** workers, i. e. people working in academia, administration, commerce, etc., and the **working class**. The working class consists of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled so-called **blue-collar** workers, i. e. people doing manual work in trade, industries, etc. As a result of drastic changes in the industries, like technological progress or global outsourcing, the working class is often hit by unemployment and a new so-called **underclass** has developed. Furthermore, there are the **working poor**, people who do have jobs but do not earn enough to make a living. Class riots, for example when cuts in welfare benefits are announced, are not uncommon in the UK. Members of the working class also tend to be among the harshest critics of ⇒ **globalisation** or ⇒ **immigration** as they see their basis of life threatened by these processes.

Generally, the UK is often accused of still being a **class-ridden society** where one's social background determines strongly one's chances in life. For instance, the British educational system with its very expensive **public schools** and the often poorly funded **state schools** is seen as an indicator. Graduates of the most expensive public schools, like Eton or Harrow, as well as the elite universities Oxford and Cambridge are often the ones who also occupy positions of power in working life and their networks with old school or university peers hardly admit newcomers or social climbers. Other critics see the still-existent **House of Lords** or the institution of the **monarchy** as markers of British class-consciousness. While the Lords have been stripped of many of their powers in recent years, **republicanism**, i. e. the anti-monarchist movement, does not seem to be particularly prevalent according to recent surveys among the British population.

social security

A welfare state's aim is to provide a basic standard of living for all its citizens, which means that in times of crisis, for example unemployment, serious illness, accidents, etc., a tax-based social security system should step in to prevent people from falling into poverty. The beginnings of the **welfare state** in the **UK** can be traced back to the early 20th century when David Lloyd George was prime minister. His introduction of taxes for the richer and pensions can be seen as a consequence of the pressure newly established **trade unions**, the ⇒ **Labour Party** and socialist organisations like the Fabian Society exerted. Before that, the Industrial Revolution, while making parts of the population immensely rich, plunged others into poverty. Charles Dickens's novels describe the desperate conditions in the so-called workhouses of that time. Many saw turning to crime as the only alternative to suffering the consequences of abject poverty.

The **modern welfare state** originated **after World War II** under a **Labour** government, led by Clement Attlee. That was also when the **National Health Service (NHS)** was founded and allowed medical treatment for anyone who needed it, not only to those who could pay for it. While the NHS and the welfare state's benefits are indisputable, the increasing financial burden social security puts on the state and the taxpayers in an **ageing society** will remain a challenge for governments to come.

In the **USA**, social welfare is one of the most **contentious issues** between politicians of different denominations. According to the predominantly ⇒ **Republican** view, social welfare contradicts the American ideal of self-reliance and being responsible for one's own fate. Although ⇒ **Democratic** President Johnson laid the foundations of a social security system in the 1960s, Republican presidents have ever since tried to erode or stop future developments, like Trump's resistance against his predecessor Obama's 2010 Affordable Care Act ("**ObamaCare**") during his first term in office showed. Up until today, the USA remains the only major industrial state without a nationwide consistent health insurance programme.

sustainability

Sustainability is one of the buzz words of modern times, especially with regards to the **environment**. More and more frequently, it is also used to describe **social** aspects and a climate of general satisfaction, in contrast to the exploitation of many for the profits of a few. A sustainable lifestyle is well able to function in the long run. Therefore, political or economic decisions should be taken with the **future** and the interconnectedness of all living organisms and ecosystems in mind. This attitude is directed against a climate of waste and fast profits, which ignores future repercussions of present-day actions.

UN (United Nations)

The United Nations organisation is the most powerful **intergovernmental organisation** in the world. It was founded after the Second World War with the express intention to improve international cooperation and thereby prevent further wars. Besides **peacekeeping** and rules for **international cooperation**, the UN's focus is on human rights as well as on ⇒ **sustainability** and **environmentally friendly development** and prosperity for all nations. It has grown from 51 member states when it was founded in 1945 to more than 190 member states today. The main organs of the UN are the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the UN Secretariat and the International Court of Justice.

uncodified constitution (UK)

In contrast to a codified constitution, which is written down in a single document, the UK's constitution is uncodified because there is not one single point of reference, but the constitutional rights rest on **statute law** (all acts which are passed by Parliament), **common law** (decisions in court), **parliamentary conventions** and **historical documents**. The UK's constitution is sometimes called an unwritten one although this term is strictly speaking not precise enough. The laws, decisions and conventions that form the UK constitution might exist in written form, but they are not collected in a single document. This is a striking example of Parliament's powerful position, which is also expressed in the term **parliamentary sovereignty:** Acts of Parliament are the supreme source of law in the UK and thereby Parliament can quite easily and indeed does constantly change the constitution.

universal basic income (UBI)

The term "universal basic income" describes the idea of regularly paying everyone (in a certain designated area) a fixed sum of money, irrespective of whether they work or not. Despite a number of pilot projects, a universal basic income has not been implemented nationally in any country. The Alaska Permanent Fund, which pays the citizens of Alaska a yearly sum of money generated from oil and mining, is regarded as the only real-life example of a basic income. Critics of a UBI (Universal Basic Income) reject it as a ⇒ utopia and argue that a universal distribution of money without any preconditions is not economically feasible and would undermine the principles of fairness and working motivation. However, particularly in the context of the ⇒ **digital revolution** and the emergence of ⇒ **AI** technologies, it might be possible to unlock sufficient wealth for a universal basic income to be viable. Proponents of the idea further argue that bureaucracy could be reduced if there were a universal basic income instead of means-tested schemes. Furthermore, if people were not forced to work, everyone would be free to pursue their interests and talents, which would even be profitable for economies in the long term.

USMCA

The **USMCA** (United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement) replaced **NAFTA** (North American Free Trade Agreement) in July 2020. The agreement is supposed to benefit the three countries' economies, for instance by removing trade barriers. Similar to other **free trade agreements**, it is not undisputed, however, as people fear negative consequences for the environment as well as for some workers and industries who might face more severe competition as a result of a free trade zone. In the wake of Trump's second election victory, the three countries' (economic) relationships have been an ongoing topic of discussion.

utopia

Literally, utopia means "no-place". In literature, a utopia is an imagined, non-existent society where living conditions are perfect. However, as perfection is closely connected to ideology and what is considered perfect may vary from individual to individual, any utopia can easily be turned into its opposite, a ⇒ **dystopia**, where uniform values are indiscriminately applied to everyone.

Vietnam War

The USA's involvement in the Vietnam War must be seen in the wider context of the country's ⇒ **anti-communist** stance and its fear of communism spreading throughout the world. After the First Indochina War between Vietnam and France had ended in 1954, the country was divided into a North and a South Vietnamese part. This partition was supposed to be provisional with national elections and a reunification announced. However, the regime of **South Vietnam** refused to hold elections for fear of the **Communist North** becoming too powerful. The conflict finally turned into military quarrels in which the USA supported South Vietnam by sending them weapons and finally even deploying ground troops to the country in 1964. The Vietnam War provoked **massive worldwide protests** and badly tarnished the US reputation in their own country as well as abroad. Both the justification for entering into the war and the cruel warfare itself as well as the targeting of civilians were heavily criticised. For instance, the US forces used chemicals like "**Agent Orange**" to defoliate forests and undermine the Communist Vietcong's guerrilla tactics. Up to this day, these chemicals continue to have health impacts on millions of Vietnamese people. Finally, the US involvement was also ineffective and after the government had to admit their defeat in 1975, the war ended with North Vietnam taking over control of the country. The Vietnam War is still perceived as a traumatic watershed in the USA's military history because of the loss of human life, money and self-confidence it entailed for the country.

War of Independence

The War of Independence (1775–1783) was fought between the UK and its 13 American colonies, which after their independence became the United States of America. The war resulted from an ongoing conflict between the mother country and its colonists, who felt misrepresented and oppressed. The famous slogan, "**no taxation without representation**", summarises this attitude well: the colonists felt that they were only exploited to serve the British Crown's interests, but were never consulted and had no say in how they wished to be governed. Several incidents of insurrection, like the **Boston Tea Party** in

1773, for instance, when colonists threw tea overboard of ships of the East India Company to protest tax laws, were met not with concessions or a willingness to cooperate and compromise, but rather with ever more repressive laws. Armed conflict resulted, which the colonists under leadership of George Washington as their commander and with the support of French troops finally won in 1783. George Washington also became the first president of the independent democratic United States of America. In the midst of the war, on 4 July 1776, the **Declaration of Independence** was issued. Its world-famous second sentence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness", focuses on human rights and the equality of all human beings. Democracy and freedom should result as natural consequences of this equality. However, in 1776, the principle of equality did not apply to women nor to people who were not White. Still, the Declaration of Independence has served as an ideal to aspire to and a model to copy by people and governments throughout the world.

War on Terrorism

The War on Terrorism was announced by US President George W. Bush immediately after the ⇒ **9/11-attacks**. Since then, several wars, predominantly those in Iraq (2003–2011) and Afghanistan (2001–2021), have unofficially been called Wars on Terror. Although Obama declared the War on Terror over in 2013, renewed military action against the so-called Islamic State terrorists as well as a then continuing military presence in Afghanistan could still be called Wars on Terror. However, the term itself has never been undisputed and the wars fought on its basis have been highly controversial. **Terrorism** itself is very hard to define. In one potential definition, it comprises unlawful acts of violence that are intentionally directed at civilians to create fear and confusion. These are often perpetrated by radical religiously or politically motivated groups. As a consequence of this rather vague and, as some point out, subjective definition, the justification of fighting terrorism can be used as a pretext to pursue almost any military or political goals because there is no clear-cut enemy against whom to direct the aggressions. Additionally, waging war seems to be an ineffective means against terrorism because by harming and potentially destroying whole countries in retribution for terrorist attacks, the breeding ground on which terrorism flourishes only becomes larger. Other criticism concerns the fact that governments committed to fight terrorism have also reduced civil liberties in the process and, on the pretext of enhancing security, have turned into surveillance societies.